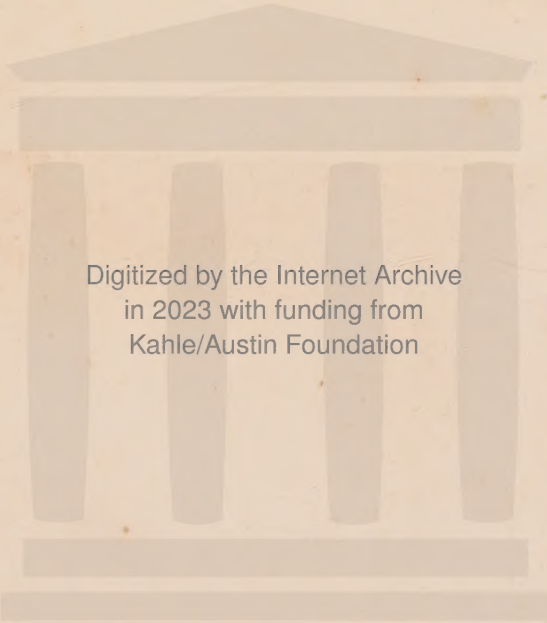


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AN ANTHOLOGY

SELECTED BY
F. H. PRITCHARD

EDITOR OF "ESSAYS OF TO-DAY"
AUTHOR OF "ESSENTIALS OF MODERN ENGLISH"
"TRAINING IN LITERARY APPRECIATION"
"STUDIES IN LITERATURE" ETC.



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PREFACE

AT this time of day it would hardly seem necessary to enter a plea for the introduction of humour into the classroom. Happily the time has gone when a teacher could be condemned for raising a laugh and when nothing but the grimmest decorum was considered fitting in school. We have learned the value of co-operation and of good-humoured laughter in lightening the burdens of the day, and the humorist of to-day may surely join in the good work of ameliorating the process of education—a process which, try as we will to improve it, must continue to call for the qualities of forbearance and patience in both teacher and pupil.

It is not to be expected, nor even desired, that the reader will find all the following selections equally satisfying to his own sense of humour—"that is," as Private Willis would say, "assuming that he's got any." Opinions vary and tastes differ perhaps more widely in this particular than any other, and to dogmatize on such ground is hazardous indeed. Yet a wide net has been cast, and it is confidently expected that no one will fail to find something that jumps with his humour. To the not unreasonable complaint that this or that humorist is not represented here, it must be answered that the present collection does not pretend to be exhaustive, and that the compiler never has a perfectly free hand in the matter of selection. You can only guess at what he would have given you had there been no consideration of expense or of space to limit him. This is an imperfect world, and it is to this very imperfection that you owe your humour. Here, then,

is a collection which you are asked to accept as, considering all things, not unfairly representative of the best humour of to-day. And for the fact that so many good things are here assembled deep gratitude is due to all the authors and publishers concerned, particularly to Mr R. C. Benchley and Messrs John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., for "Christmas Afternoon," from *Of All Things*; to Mr Arnold Bennett for "Hot Potatoes," from *The Matador of the Five Towns*; to the Rev. J. O. Hannay and Messrs Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., for "Dr O'Grady and the Cook," from *Send for Dr O'Grady*; to Mr Ernest Bramah and Messrs Grant Richards, Ltd., for "The Story of the Willow Plate Embellishment," from *Kai Lung's Golden Hours*; to Messrs James Nisbet and Co., Ltd., for "Of my So-called Painting," from *The New Foresters*; to Mr B. Macdonald Hastings for "The Once-a-year Cricketer"; to Major John Hay Beith and Messrs William Blackwood and Sons for "Of a Pit that was Digged," from *The Right Stuff*; to Mr John Henry and Messrs James Nisbet and Co., Ltd., for "About Wireless," from *Still Calling*; to Messrs Doubleday, Page and Co., for "The Making of a New Yorker," from *The Trimmed Lamp*; to Mr A. P. Herbert and Messrs Methuen and Co., Ltd., for "On with the Dance," from *Light Articles Only*; to Mr R. S. Hooper and Messrs John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., for "On Having a Cold," from *And the Next*; to Mr W. W. Jacobs for "The Understudy," from *Night Watches*; to Mr Jerome K. Jerome and Messrs J. W. Arrowsmith (London), Ltd., for "How Harris Lost his Wife," from *Three Men on the Bummel*; to Mr E. V. Knox and Messrs George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., for "The Third Bathe," from *An Hour from Victoria*; to Mrs John Lane and Messrs John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., for "Maria on Poetry," from *According to*

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F. H. P.

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INTRODUCTION

THAT humour is grounded in discontent would seem at first sight a hard saying, yet it is clear that there is always in it a lack of proportion. It may be in the length of the nose or in the depth of the purse, but, whether important or unimportant, the disproportion is invariably accompanied by a feeling of discomfort and a consequent desire to set the ill-adjusted matter right. Laughter and tears are alike in that they are the natural outcome of dissatisfaction, and between them lies a whole gamut of expressed emotion. Whether you will laugh or whether you will weep at a given cause depends not so much upon the nature of that cause as upon the exact balance of the feelings at the moment, upon the age, and upon the point of view. In the early crusading years, when one is grimly in earnest and positive in the belief that things can and must be altered, there is little time for laughter or for tears : it is the occasion rather for violent attack and impassioned protest. Later, when it is realized that, for good or ill, the world goes jogging on its way much as before, then we may laugh or we may weep at what we find ourselves powerless to amend. The greatest humorists have been by no means the most comfortably placed, and the world's notable jokes have been cracked oftentimes in the face of gravest danger or distress. So Charles Lamb stutters forth his quips under the shadow of Mary's madness and Sir Thomas More jests in the very act of kneeling at the block. Fiction is a true mirror of life in this particular. Poor Falstaff is never in finer fettle than when he is dragged

all unwillingly to the battlefield, and Mark Tapley finds in the dismal swamps of New Eden something approaching to a justification for his jollity.

That acute observer M. André Maurois has noted as a characteristic of the English that "when they are very unhappy they put on a mask of humour." One would wish to give him full credit for the keenness of his observation while reserving the right to quarrel a little with the terms of his expression. Humour is not merely a mask that is put on to hide a sad heart. It is as natural and inevitable as tears, and it springs, as we have seen, from like causes. There is some incongruity or maladjustment in one's surroundings, which will appear sad or funny according to temperament and circumstances. Thus humour, pathos, and all the many gradations and admixtures that lie between are ways by which great artists express the relation of man to his surroundings and to himself. His many shifts to rid himself of incongruities and discords, and to adapt himself to his setting, provide the writer with subject-matter. The fundamental and inescapable fact that the spirit of man is hampered by the flesh with all its attendant ills may, for instance, be expressed either as a huge joke or as a supreme tragedy. Bottom may be transported to Fairyland, but his grossness renders him unable to share in the sweets which Titania offers him.

The truth that humour is essentially a most serious thing is not often recognized. All the great humorists, from Aristophanes to Rabelais and on to our day, have been regarded by many as mere buffoons. Mr Jerome K. Jerome has pleaded in vain to be taken seriously, but Montmorency is cited as evidence against him. Mr Bernard Shaw's quips mightily amuse vast audiences who steadily refuse to be perturbed by the gravity

of his purpose. Yet the jester can on occasion lay aside the cap and bells and whisper words of deep import in his sovereign's ear, and it is certain that the only real humorists are serious-minded. A flip-pant writer may produce sparkling wit, but never a true comedy.

"Life," said Horace Walpole, "is a comedy to the man who thinks and a tragedy to the man who feels." M. Bergson has expressed this by saying that laughter and sympathy are incompatible—one of those easy judgments that are superficially so convincing. According to this view the humorist is a man with more brain than heart. Like a god on Olympus, he sits enthroned above the dust of our petty struggles, and laughs consumedly at them all, just as we might deride the labours of ants who scurry here and there for no very obvious purpose. This neat method of labelling men and thoughts is certainly convenient, and would save a deal of trouble were it true. Unfortunately, however, the facts are not in the least amenable to this treatment. What are we to do with Shakespeare, the creator of Falstaff and of Hamlet? Or, to come down to the present day, where are we to place Mr W. W. Jacobs, who offers us that grim tale *The Well* cheek by jowl with one of the night-watchman's rollicking yarns? It is inconceivable that these writers, at one time overcome by their feelings, produced tragedies, and at another, governed by their thoughts, wrote comedies. The truth is that comedy cannot be divorced from tragedy any more than sunshine can be separated from shadow. Both proceed from the same cause, and a failure to appreciate the one involves a like failure to understand the other. Mr Jerome K. Jerome has confessed to being of "a melancholy, brooding disposition," and it is a man of that type, with his

keen realization of the sadness of things, who is best able to render for us the humour which is its natural concomitant.

It should be clear, then, that a sense of disproportion is at the root of all humour ; that humour is essentially serious in its nature ; and that great humour is only possible to a great and sympathetic mind. We have now to take note of the extent to which these characteristics still obtain. For it is time to turn to a consideration of the humour of the present day, which this collection professes in some measure to represent. Mr T. S. Eliot, speaking of " the old English humour, the terribly serious, even savage comic humour, the humour which spent its last breath on the decadent genius of Dickens," proceeds to declare that it has nothing in common with the typical humour of to-day. He would seem to suggest that humour with us has become but a finicking affair, decked out, as the valiant Hotspur would put it, in " holiday and lady terms," and so presenting but an attenuated shadow of its former substantial and hilarious self.

Is it true that humour has fallen on such evil days ? It would be wise to hesitate before coming to a decision. There was certainly a massiveness about the old humour which the new does not possess. It was planned and executed in the grand manner. By sheer size and weight it impelled reverential attention. But humour is not alone in the loss of these qualities. Our houses, furniture, and dress have all shrunk, assuming a jaunty and temporary air that would have horrified our ancestors. We no longer listen to sermons by the hour, nor do we, as a rule, tolerate three-volume novels. But though forms change essentials remain, and because, in common with many other things, the trappings and the suits of humour have been altered almost out

of all knowledge, it would not be safe to assume that the nature and groundwork of humour had changed also. It is certainly not so savage, but it is just as serious in its intention, and we still laugh at the same things—the old causes of discontent. The landlubber is as amusingly unhappy as ever at sea and the seaman no less laughably awkward when ashore. Misunderstandings are at once tragic and comic. Excess of any kind is, to-day as ever, both amusing and pathetic. The humour of Aristophanes or of Theocritus is astonishingly up-to-date: that of our modern humorists is surprisingly old. The chatter of certain ladies of Syracuse might have been heard in Bond Street yesterday. The fierceness of Raggles' new-found patriotism might take its date from any year since our history began. And the humorist still castigates our follies and idiosyncrasies. Ian Hay laughs at the nonchalance with which public bodies disembowel our streets and the patience with which we endure the process. By so doing he renders a public service more effectively than by writing any number of ponderous letters of protest to the *Times*. John Henry pokes fun at the amateur's bungling attempts, and we see ourselves all too plainly in the mirror which he holds before our eyes. So, too, A. P. Herbert and Basil Macdonald Hastings both gently remind us of the passage of years and of a prowess that has departed, while Robert Benchley smiles a little grimly over those gloomy festive occasions that have ceased to be festive in anything but name. Here we may see human frailties pilloried no less effectively because they have been so treated with a good-humoured laugh. More is wrought by humour than by polemics, and the need for that salutary service which the humorist alone can render was never greater than it is now. In spite of all its necessary limitations

it is hoped that the present volume will give some indication of the manner in which that need is being met. It will, at all events, afford some good entertainment, and at the same time hold up a true mirror to the life of to-day.

HUMOUR OF TO-DAY

CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON

ROBERT C. BENCHLEY

WHAT an afternoon ! Mr Gummidge said that, in his estimation, there never had *been* such an afternoon since the world began, a sentiment which was heartily endorsed by Mrs Gummidge and all the little Gummidges, not to mention the relatives who had come over from Jersey for the day.

In the first place, there was the *ennui*. And such *ennui* as it was ! A heavy, overpowering *ennui*, such as results from a participation in eight courses of steaming, gravied food, topping off with salted nuts which the little old spinster Gummidge from Oak Hill said she never knew when to stop eating—and true enough she didn't—a dragging, devitalizing *ennui*, which left its victims strewn about the living-room in various attitudes of prostration suggestive of those of the petrified occupants in a newly unearthed Pompeian dwelling ; an *ennui* which carried with it a retinue of yawns, snarls, and thinly veiled insults, and which ended in ruptures in the clan spirit serious enough to last throughout the glad new year.

Then there were the toys ! Three and a quarter dozen toys to be divided among seven children. Surely enough, you or I might say, to satisfy the little tots. But that would be because we didn't know the tots. In came Baby Lester Gummidge, Lillian's boy, dragging an electric grain-elevator, which happened to be the only toy in the entire collection which appealed to

little Norman, five-year-old son of Luther, who lived in Rahway. In came curly-headed Effie in frantic and throaty disputation with Arthur, Jr., over the possession of an articulated zebra. In came Everett, bearing a mechanical negro which would no longer dance, owing to a previous forcible feeding by the baby of a marshmallow into its only available aperture. In came Fonlansbee, teeth buried in the hand of little Ormond, which bore a popular but battered remnant of what had once been the proud false-bosom of a hussar's uniform. In they all came, one after another, some crying, some snapping, some pulling, some pushing—all appealing to their respective parents for aid in their intra-mural warfare.

And the cigar-smoke! Mrs Gummidge said that she didn't mind the smoke from a good cigarette, but would they mind if she opened the windows for just a minute in order to clear the room of the heavy aroma of used cigars? Mr Gummidge stoutly maintained that they were good cigars. His brother, George Gummidge, said that he, likewise, would say that they were. At which colloquial saliety both the Gummidge brothers laughed testily, thereby breaking the laughter record for the afternoon.

Aunt Libbie, who lived with George, remarked from the dark corner of the room that it seemed just like Sunday to her. An amendment was offered to this statement by the cousin, who was in the insurance business, stating that it was worse than Sunday. Murmurings indicative of as hearty agreement with this sentiment as their lethargy would allow came from the other members of the family circle, causing Mr Gummidge to suggest a walk in the air to settle their dinner.

And then arose such a chorus of protestations as has

seldom been heard. It was too cloudy to walk. It was too raw. It looked like snow. It looked like rain. Luther Gummidge said that he must be starting along home soon, anyway, bringing forth the acid query from Mrs Gummidge as to whether or not he was bored. Lillian said that she felt a cold coming on, and added that something they had for dinner must have been undercooked. And so it went, back and forth, forth and back, up and down, and in and out, until Mr Gummidge's suggestion of a walk in the air was reduced to a tattered impossibility and the entire company glowed with ill-feeling.

In the meantime we must not forget the children. No one else could. Aunt Libbie said that she didn't think there was anything like children to make a Christmas; to which Uncle Ray, the one with the Masonic fob, said, "No, thank God!" Although Christmas is supposed to be the season of good cheer, you (or I, for that matter) couldn't have told, from listening to the little ones, but what it was the children's Armageddon season, when Nature had decreed that only the fittest should survive, in order that the race might be carried on by the strongest, the most predatory, and those possessing the best protective colouring. Although there were constant admonitions to Fonlansbee to "Let Ormond have that whistle now; it's his," and to Arthur, Jr., not to be selfish, but to "give the kiddie-car to Effie; she's smaller than you are," the net result was always that Fonlansbee kept the whistle and Arthur, Jr., rode in permanent, albeit disputed, possession of the kiddie-car. Oh, that we mortals should set ourselves up against the inscrutable workings of Nature!

Hallo! A great deal of commotion! That was Uncle George stumbling over the electric train, which

had early in the afternoon ceased to function and which had been left directly across the threshold. A great deal of crying ! That was Arthur, Jr., bewailing the destruction of his already useless train, about which he had forgotten until the present moment. A great deal of recrimination ! That was Arthur, Sr., and George fixing it up. And finally a great crashing ! That was Baby Lester pulling over the tree on top of himself, necessitating the bringing to bear of all of Uncle Ray's knowledge of forestry to extricate him from the wreckage.

And finally Mrs Gummidge passed the Christmas candy around. Mr Gummidge afterward admitted that this was a tactical error on the part of his spouse. I no more believe that Mrs Gummidge thought they wanted that Christmas candy than I believe that she thought they wanted the cold turkey which she later suggested. My opinion is that she wanted to drive them home. At any rate, that is what she succeeded in doing. Such cries as there were of " Ugh ! Don't let me see another thing to eat ! " and " Take it away ! " Then came hurried scramblings in the coat-closet for overshoes. There were the rasping sounds made by cross parents when putting wraps on children. There were insincere exhortations to " come and see us soon " and to " get together for lunch some time. " And, finally, there were slamming of doors and the silence of utter exhaustion, while Mrs Gummidge went about picking up stray sheets of wrapping-paper.

And, as Tiny Tim might say in speaking of Christmas afternoon as an institution, " God help us, every one. "

From " Of All Things "

HOT POTATOES

ARNOLD BENNETT

I

IT was considered by certain people to be a dramatic moment in the history of musical enterprise in the Five Towns when Mrs Swann opened the front door of her house at Bleakridge, in the early darkness of a November evening, and let forth her son Gilbert. Gilbert's age was nineteen, and he was wearing evening dress, a form of raiment that had not hitherto happened to him. Over the elegant suit was his winter overcoat, making him bulky, and round what may be called the rim of the overcoat was a white woollen scarf, and the sleeves of the overcoat were finished off with white woollen gloves. Under one arm he carried a vast inanimate form whose extremity just escaped the ground. This form was his violoncello, fragile as a pretty woman, ungainly as a navvy, and precious as honour. Mrs Swann looked down the street, which ended to the east in darkness and a marl-pit, and up the street, which ended to the west in Trafalgar Road and electric cars; and she shivered, though she had a shawl over her independent little shoulders. In the Five Towns, and probably elsewhere, when a woman puts her head out of her front door, she always looks first to right and then to left, like a scouting Iroquois, and if the air nips she shivers—not because she is cold, but merely to express herself.

“For goodness sake, keep your hands warm,” Mrs Swann enjoined her son.

“Oh!” said Gilbert, with scornful lightness, as

though his playing had never suffered from cold hands, "it's quite warm to-night!" Which it was not.

"And mind what you eat!" added his mother. "There! I can hear the car."

He hurried up the street. The electric tram slid in thunder down Trafalgar Road, and stopped for him with a jar, and he gingerly climbed into it, practising all precautions on behalf of his violoncello. The car slid away again towards Bursley, making blue sparks. Mrs Swann stared mechanically at the flickering gas in her lobby, and then closed her front door. He was gone! The boy was gone!

Now, the people who considered the boy's departure to be a dramatic moment in the history of musical enterprise in the Five Towns were Mrs Swann, chiefly, and the boy, secondarily.

II

And more than the moment—the day, nay, the whole week—was dramatic in the history of local musical enterprise.

It had occurred to somebody in Hanbridge, about a year before, that since York, Norwich, Hereford, Gloucester, Birmingham, and even Blackpool had their musical festivals, the Five Towns, too, ought to have its musical festival. The Five Towns possessed a larger population than any of these centres save Birmingham, and it was notorious for its love of music. Choirs from the Five Towns had gone to all sorts of places—such as Brecknock, Aberystwyth, the Crystal Palace, and even a place called Hull—and had come back with first prizes—cups and banners—for the singing of choruses and part-songs. There were three (or at least two and a half) rival choirs in Hanbridge alone. Then also the brass band contests were famously attended. In the

Five Towns the number of cornet-players is scarcely exceeded by the number of public-houses. Hence the feeling, born and fanned into lustiness at Hanbridge, that the Five Towns owed it to its self-respect to have a Musical Festival like the rest of the world! Men who had never heard of Wagner, men who could not have told the difference between a sonata and a sonnet to save their souls, men who spent all their lives in manufacturing teacups or china door-knobs, were invited to guarantee five pounds apiece against possible loss on the festival; and they bravely and blindly did so. The conductor of the largest Hanbridge choir, being appointed to conduct the preliminary rehearsals of the Festival Chorus, had an acute attack of self-importance, which, by the way, almost ended fatally a year later.

Double-crown posters appeared magically on all the hoardings announcing that a Festival consisting of three evening and two morning concerts would be held in the Alexandra Hall, at Hanbridge, on the 6th, 7th, and 8th November, and that the box-plan could be consulted at the principal stationers. The Alexandra Hall contained no boxes whatever, but "box-plan" was the phrase sacred to the occasion, and had to be used. And the Festival more and more impregnated the air, and took the lion's share of the columns of the *Staffordshire Signal*. Every few days the *Signal* reported progress, even to intimate biographical details of the singers engaged, and of the composers to be performed, together with analyses of the latter's works. And at last the week itself had dawned in exhilaration and excitement. And early on the day before the opening day John Merazzi, the renowned conductor, and Herbert Millwain, the renowned leader of the orchestra, and the renowned orchestra itself, all arrived from London. And finally sundry musical critics arrived from the

offices of sundry London dailies. The presence of these latter convinced an awed population that its Festival was a real Festival, and not a local make-believe. And it also tranquillized in some degree the exasperating and disconcerting effect of a telegram from the capricious Countess of Chell (who had taken six balcony seats and was the official advertised high patroness of the Festival) announcing at the last moment that she could not attend.

III

Mrs Swann's justification for considering (as she in fact did consider) that her son was either the base or the apex of the splendid pyramid of the Festival lay in the following facts :

From earliest infancy Gilbert had been a musical prodigy, and the circle of his fame had constantly been extending. He could play the piano with his hands before his legs were long enough for him to play it with his feet. That is to say, before he could use the pedals. A spectacle formerly familiar to the delighted friends of the Swanns was Gilbert, in a pinafore and curls, seated on a high chair topped with a large Bible and a bound volume of the *Graphic*, playing *Home, Sweet Home* with Thalberg's variations, while his mother, standing by his side on her right foot, put the loud pedal on or off with her left foot according to the infant's whispered orders. He had been allowed to play from ear—playing from ear being deemed especially marvellous—until some expert told Mrs Swann that playing solely from ear was a practice to be avoided if she wished her son to fulfil the promise of his babyhood. Then he had lessons at Knype, until he began to teach his teacher. Then he said he would learn the fiddle, and he did learn the fiddle ; also the viola. He did not pretend to play

the flute, though he could. And at school the other boys would bring him their penny or even sixpenny whistles so that he might show them of what wonderful feats a common tin whistle is capable.

Mr Swann was secretary for the Toft End Brickworks and Colliery Company (Limited). Mr Swann had passed the whole of his career in the offices of the prosperous Toft End Company, and his imagination did not move freely beyond the company's premises. He had certainly intended that Gilbert should follow in his steps; perhaps he meant to establish a dynasty of Swanns, in which the secretaryship of the 20 per cent. paying company should descend for ever from father to son. But Gilbert's astounding facility in music had shaken even this resolve, and Gilbert had been allowed at the age of fifteen to enter, as assistant, the shop of Mr James Otkinson, the piano and musical instrument dealer and music-seller, in Crown Square, Hanbridge. Here, of course, he found himself in a musical atmosphere. Here he had at once established a reputation for showing off the merits of a piano, a song, or a waltz to customers male and female. Here he had thirty pianos, seven harmoniums, and all the new and a lot of classical music to experiment with. He would play any 'piece' at sight for the benefit of any lady in search of a nice easy waltz or reverie. Unfortunately ladies would complain that the pieces proved much more difficult at home than they had seemed under the fingers of Gilbert in the shop. Here, too, he began to give lessons on the piano. And here he satisfied his secret ambition to learn the violoncello, Mr Otkinson having in stock a violoncello that had never found a proper customer. His progress with the 'cello had been such that the theatre people offered him an engagement, which his father and his own sense of the enormous respectability

of the Swanns compelled him to refuse. But he always played in the band of the Five Towns Amateur Operatic Society, and was beloved by its conductor as being utterly reliable. His connection with choirs started through his merits as a rehearsal accompanist who could keep time and make his bass chords heard against a hundred and fifty voices. He had been appointed (*nem. con.*) rehearsal accompanist to the Festival Chorus. He knew the entire Festival music backwards and upside-down. And his modestly expressed desire to add his 'cello as one of the local reinforcements of the London orchestra had been almost eagerly complied with by the Advisory Committee.

Nor was this all. He had been invited to dinner by Mrs Clayton Vernon, the social leader of Bursley. In the affair of the Festival Mrs Clayton Vernon loomed larger than even she really was. And this was due to an accident, to a sheer bit of luck on her part. She happened to be a cousin of Mr Herbert Millwain, the leader of the orchestra down from London. Mrs Clayton Vernon knew no more about music than she knew about the North Pole, and cared no more. But she was Mr Millwain's cousin, and Mr Millwain had naturally to stay at her house. And she came in her carriage to fetch him from the band rehearsals; and, in short, anyone might have thought from her self-satisfied demeanour (though she was a decent sort of woman at heart) that she had at least composed *Judas Macabews*. It was at a band rehearsal that she had graciously commanded Gilbert Swann to come and dine with her and Mr Millwain between the final rehearsal and the opening concert. This invitation was, as it were, the overflowing drop in Mrs Swann's cup. It was proof, to her, that Mr Millwain had instantly pronounced Gilbert to be the equal of London 'cellists, and perhaps

their superior. It was proof, to her, that Mr Millwain relied on him particularly to maintain the honour of the band in the Festival.

Gilbert had dashed home from the final rehearsal, and his mother had helped him with the unfamiliarities of evening dress, while he gave her a list of all the places in the music where, as he said, the band was "rocky," and especially the 'cellos, and a further list of all the smart musical things that the players from London had said to him and he had said to them. He simply knew everything from the inside. And not even the great Merazzi, the conductor, was more familiar with the music than he. And the ineffable Mrs Clayton Vernon had asked him to dinner with Mr Millwain! It was indubitable to Mrs Swann that all the Festival rested on her son's shoulders.

IV

"It's freezing, I think," said Mr Swann, when he came home at six o'clock from his day's majestic work at Toft End. This was in the bedroom. Mrs Swann, a comely little thing of thirty-nine, was making herself resplendent for the inaugural solemnity of the Festival, which began at eight. The news of the frost disturbed her.

"How annoying!" she said.

"Annoying?" he questioned blandly. "Why?"

"Now you needn't put on any of your airs, John!" she snapped. She had a curt way with her at critical times. "You know as well as I do that I'm thinking of Gilbert's hands. . . . No! you must wear your frock-coat, of course! . . . All that drive from the other end of the town right to Hanbridge in a carriage! Perhaps outside the carriage, because of the 'cello!

There'll never be room for two of them and the 'cello and Mrs Clayton Vernon in her carriage! And he can't keep his hands in his pockets because of holding the 'cello. And he's bound to pretend he isn't cold. He's so silly. And yet he knows perfectly well he won't do himself justice if his hands are cold. Don't you remember last year at the Town Hall?"

"Well," said Mr Swann, "we can't do anything; anyway, we must hope for the best."

"That's all very well," said Mrs Swann. And it was.

Shortly afterwards, perfect in most details of her black silk, she left the bedroom, requesting her husband to be quick, as tea was ready. And she came into the little dining-room where the youthful servant was poking up the fire.

"Jane," she said, "put two medium-sized potatoes in the oven to bake."

"Potatoes, mum?"

"Yes, potatoes," said Mrs Swann, tartly.

It was an idea of pure genius that had suddenly struck her; the genius of common sense.

She somewhat hurried the tea; then rang.

"Jane," she inquired, "are those potatoes ready?"

"Potatoes?" exclaimed Mr Swann.

"Yes, hot potatoes," said Mrs Swann, tartly. "I'm going to run up with them by car to Mrs Vernon's. I can slip them quietly over to Gil. They keep your hands warm better than anything. Don't I remember when I was a child! I shall leave Mrs Vernon's immediately, of course, but perhaps you'd better give me my ticket and I will meet you at the hall. Don't you think it's the best plan, John?"

"As you like," said Mr Swann, with the force of habit.

He was supreme in most things, but in the practical details of their son's life and comfort she was supreme. Her decision in such matters had never been questioned. Mr Swann had a profound belief in his wife as a uniquely capable and energetic woman. He was tremendously loyal to her, and he sternly inculcated the same loyalty to her in Gilbert.

V

Just as the car had stopped at the end of the street for Gilbert and his violoncello, so—more than an hour later—it stopped for Mrs Swann and her hot potatoes.

They were hot potatoes—nay, very hot potatoes—of a medium size, because Mrs Swann's recollections of youth had informed her that if a potato is too large one cannot get one's fingers well around it, and if it is too small it cools somewhat rapidly. She had taken two, not in the hope that Gilbert would be able to use two at once, for one cannot properly nurse either a baby or a 'cello with two hands full of potatoes, but rather to provide against accident. Besides, the inventive boy might after all find a way of using both simultaneously, which would be all the better for his playing at the concert, and hence all the better for the success of the Musical Festival.

It never occurred to Mrs Swann that she was doing anything in the least unusual. There she was, in her best boots, and her best dress, and her best hat, and her sealskin mantle (not easily to be surpassed in the town), and her muff to match (nearly), and concealed in the muff were the two very hot potatoes. And it did not strike her that women of fashion like herself, wives of secretaries of flourishing companies, do not commonly go about with hot potatoes concealed on their persons. For she was a self-confident woman,

and after a decision she did not reflect, nor did she heed minor consequences. She was always sure that what she was doing was the right and only thing to do. And, to give her justice, it was ; for her direct, abrupt common sense was indeed remarkable. The act of climbing up into the car warned her that she must be skilful in the control of these potatoes ; one of them nearly fell out of the right end of her muff as she grasped the car rail with her right hand. She had to let go and save the potato, and begin again, while the car waited. The conductor took her for one of those hesitating, hysterical women who are the bane of car conductors. " Now, missis ! " he said. " Up with ye ! " But she did not care what manner of woman the conductor took her for.

The car was nearly full of people going home from their work, of people actually going in a direction contrary to the direction of the Musical Festival. She sat down among them, shocked by this indifference to the Musical Festival. At the back of her head had been an idea that all the cars for Hanbridge would be crammed to the step, and all the cars from Hanbridge forlorn and empty. She had vaguely imagined that the thoughts of a quarter of a million of people would that evening be centred on the unique Musical Festival. And she was shocked also by the conversation—not that it was in the slightest degree improper—but because it displayed no interest whatever in the Musical Festival. And yet there were several Festival advertisements adhering to the roof of the car. Travellers were discussing football, soap, the weather, rates, trade ; travellers were dozing ; travellers were reading about starting prices ; but not one seemed to be occupied with the Musical Festival. " Nevertheless," she reflected, with consoling pride, " if they knew that our Gilbert

was playing 'cello in the orchestra and dining at this very moment with Mr Millwain, some of them would be fine and surprised, that they would!" No one would ever have suspected, from her calm, careless, proud face, that such vain and twopenny thoughts were passing through her head. But the thoughts that do pass through the heads of even the most common-sensed philosophers, men and women, are truly astonishing.

In four minutes she was at Bursley Town Hall, where she changed into another car—full of people equally indifferent to the Musical Festival—for the suburb of Hillport, where Mrs Clayton Vernon lived.

"Put me out opposite Mrs Clayton Vernon's, will you?" she said to the conductor, and added, "You know the house?"

He nodded as if to say disdainfully in response to such a needless question: "Do I know the house? Do I know my pocket?"

As she left the car she did catch two men discussing the Festival, but they appeared to have no intention of attending it. They were earthenware manufacturers. One of them raised his hat to her. And she said to herself: "He at any rate knows how important my Gilbert is in the Festival!"

It was at the instant she pushed open Mrs Clayton Vernon's long and heavy garden gate, and crunched in the frosty darkness up the short winding drive, that the notion of the peculiarity of her errand first presented itself to her. Mrs Clayton Vernon was a relatively great lady, living in a relatively great house; one of the few exalted or peculiar ones who did not dine in the middle of the day like other folk. Mrs Clayton Vernon had the grand manner. Mrs Clayton Vernon instinctively and successfully patronized every-

body. Mrs Clayton Vernon was a personage with whom people did not joke. And lo! Mrs Swann was about to invade her courtly and luxurious house, uninvited, unauthorized, with a couple of hot potatoes in her muff. What would Mrs Clayton Vernon think of hot potatoes in a muff? Of course, the Swanns were "as good as anybody." The Swanns knelt before nobody. The Swanns were of the cream of the town, combining commerce with art, and why should not Mrs Swann take practical measures to keep her son's hands warm in Mrs Clayton Vernon's cold carriage? Still, there was only one Mrs Clayton Vernon in Bursley, and it was impossible to deny that she inspired awe, even in the independent soul of Mrs Swann.

Mrs Swann rang the bell, reassuring herself. The next instant an electric light miraculously came into existence outside the door, illuminating her from head to foot. This startled her. But she said to herself that it must be the latest dodge, and that, at any rate, it was a very good dodge, and she began again the process of reassuring herself. The door opened, and a prim creature stiffly starched stood before Mrs Swann. "My word!" reflected Mrs Swann, "she must cost her mistress a pretty penny for getting up aprons!" And she said aloud curtly:

"Will you please tell Mr Gilbert Swann that some one wants to speak to him a minute at the door?"

"Yes," said the servant, with pert civility. "Will you please step in?"

She had not meant to step in. She had decidedly meant not to step in, for she had no wish to encounter Mrs Clayton Vernon; indeed, the reverse. But she immediately perceived that in asking to speak to a guest at the door she had socially erred. At Mrs Clayton Vernon's refined people did not speak to refined

people at the door. So she stepped in, and the door was closed, prisoning her and her potatoes in the imposing hall.

"I only want to see Mr Gilbert Swann," she insisted.

"Yes," said the servant. "Will you please step into the breakfast-room? There's no one there. I will tell Mr Swann."

VI

As Mrs Swann was being led like a sheep out of the hall into an apartment on the right, which the servant styled the breakfast-room, another door opened, farther up the hall, and Mrs Clayton Vernon appeared. Magnificent though Mrs Swann was, the ample Mrs Clayton Vernon, discreetly *décolletée*, was even more magnificent. Dressed as she meant to show herself at the concert, Mrs Clayton Vernon made a resplendent figure worthy to be the cousin of the leader of the orchestra—and worthy even to take the place of the missing Countess of Chell. Mrs Clayton Vernon had a *lorgnon* at the end of a shaft of tortoiseshell; otherwise, a pair of eyeglasses on a stick. She had the habit of the *lorgnon*; the *lorgnon* seldom left her, and whenever she was in any doubt or difficulty she would raise the *lorgnon* to her eyes and stare patronizingly. It was a gesture tremendously effective. She employed it now on Mrs Swann, as who should say, "Who is this insignificant and scarcely visible creature that has got into my noble hall?" Mrs Swann stopped, struck into immobility by the basilisk glance. A courageous and even a defiant woman, Mrs Swann was taken aback. She could not possibly tell Mrs Clayton Vernon that she was the bearer of hot potatoes to her son. She scarcely knew Mrs Clayton Vernon, had only met her

once at a bazaar! With a convulsive unconscious movement her right hand clenched nervously within her muff and crushed the rich mealy potato it held until the flesh of the potato was forced between the fingers of her glove. A horrible sticky mess! That is the worst of a high-class potato, cooked, as the Five Towns phrase it, "in its jacket." It will burst on the least provocation. There stood Mrs Swann, her right hand glued up with escaped potato, in the sober grandeur of Mrs Clayton Vernon's hall, and Mrs Clayton Vernon bearing down upon her like a Dreadnought.

Steam actually began to emerge from her muff.

"Ah!" said Mrs Clayton Vernon, inspecting Mrs Swann. "It's Mrs Swann! How do you do, Mrs Swann?"

She seemed politely astonished, as well she might be. By a happy chance she did not perceive the wisp of steam. She was not looking for steam. People do not expect steam from the interior of a visitor's muff.

"Oh!" said Mrs Swann, who was really in a pitiable state. "I'm sorry to trouble you, Mrs Clayton Vernon. But I want to speak to Gilbert for one moment."

She then saw that Mrs Clayton Vernon's hand was graciously extended. She could not take it with her right hand, which was fully engaged with the extremely heated sultriness of the ruined potato. She could not refuse it, or ignore it. She therefore offered her left hand, which Mrs Clayton Vernon pressed with a well-bred pretence that people always offered her their left hands.

"Nothing wrong, I do hope!" said she, gravely.

"Oh, no," said Mrs Swann. "Only just a little matter which had been forgotten. Only half a minute. I must hurry off at once as I have to meet my husband. If I could just see Gilbert——"

"Certainly," said Mrs Clayton Vernon. "Do come into the breakfast-room, will you? We've just finished dinner. We had it very early, of course, for the concert. Mr Millwain—my cousin—hates to be hurried. Maria, be good enough to ask Mr Swann to come here. Tell him that his mother wishes to speak to him."

In the breakfast-room Mrs Swann was invited, nay commanded by Mrs Clayton Vernon, to loosen her mantle. But she could not loosen her mantle. She could do nothing. In clutching the potato to prevent bits of it from falling out of the muff, she of course effected the precise opposite of her purpose, and bits of the luscious and perfect potato began to descend the front of her mantle. The clock struck seven, and ages elapsed, during which Mrs Swann could not think of anything whatever to say, but the finger of the clock somehow stuck motionless at seven, though the pendulum plainly wagged.

"I'm not too warm," she said at length, feebly but obstinately resisting Mrs Clayton Vernon's command. This, to speak bluntly, was an untruth. She was too warm.

"Are you sure that nothing is the matter?" urged Mrs Clayton Vernon, justifiably alarmed by the expression of her visitor's features. "I beg you to confide in me if——"

"Not at all," said Mrs Swann, trying to laugh. "I'm only sorry to disturb you. I didn't mean to disturb you."

"What on earth is that?" cried Mrs Clayton Vernon.

The other potato, escaping Mrs Swann's vigilance, had run out of the muff and come to the carpet with a dull thud. It rolled half under Mrs Swann's dress. Almost hysterically she put her foot on it, thus making pulp of the second potato.

"What?" she inquired innocently.

"Didn't you hear anything? I trust it isn't a mouse! We have had them once."

Mrs Clayton Vernon thought how brave Mrs Swann was, not to be frightened by the word 'mouse.'

"I didn't hear anything," said Mrs Swann. Another untruth.

"If you aren't too warm, won't you come a little nearer the fire?"

But not for a thousand pounds would Mrs Swann have exposed the mush of potato on the carpet under her feet. She could not conceive in what ignominy the dreadful affair would end, but she was the kind of woman that nails her colours to the mast.

"Dear me!" Mrs Clayton Vernon murmured. "How delicious those potatoes do smell! I can smell them all over the house."

This was the most staggering remark that Mrs Swann had ever heard.

"Potatoes?" very weakly.

"Yes," said Mrs Clayton Vernon, smiling. "I must tell you that Mr Millwain is very nervous about getting his hands cold in driving to Hanbridge. And he has asked me to have hot potatoes prepared. Isn't it amusing? It seems hot potatoes are constantly used for this purpose in winter by the pupils of the Royal College of Music, and even by the professors. My cousin says that even a slight chilliness of the hands interferes with his playing. So I am having potatoes done for your son too. A delightful boy he is!"

"Really!" said Mrs Swann. "How queer! But what a good idea!"

She might have confessed then. But you do not know her if you think she did. Gilbert came in, anxious and alarmed. Mrs Clayton Vernon left them together.

The mother explained matters to the son, and in an instant of time the ruin of two magnificent potatoes was at the back of the fire. Then, without saluting Mrs Clayton Vernon, Mrs Swann fled.

From "The Matador of the Five Towns"

DR O'GRADY AND THE COOK

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

DR O'GRADY escorted Sybil back to the gates of the avenue of Rathconnell Castle, listening sympathetically while she explained the necessity for a study of the psychology of the people if the Irish question were ever to be solved satisfactorily. He once ventured to suggest that he himself was an Irish person, that indeed her uncle, Lord Rathconnell, was another, and that some time might profitably be devoted to the study of their psychology. But he did not press this, for Sybil seemed to think that he and Lord Rathconnell were quite unworthy of study, being either not really Irish or not really people; perhaps—Sybil's tone suggested this—neither Irish nor people.

At the gate of the demesne he left her. He would have liked to go up to the Castle and he knew that Lord Rathconnell would welcome him as a guest at luncheon. But Sybil said she wanted to have a long talk with her aunt, and he did not care to come between the two ladies when they were discussing what Sybil called the people, and her aunt spoke of as the lower orders. He had, besides, his proper duties to attend to. There was no serious illness in his district at the time; but there are always a number of chronic invalids who want medicine and a few babies whose mothers do not want to have them vaccinated.

The chronic invalids were waiting for O'Grady in the dispensary which adjoined his house. There were a great many of them—more than there are usually to be found in similar districts—because O'Grady had a

reputation as a doctor of unusual skill. Old people who suffer from "impressions on the chest," "weaknesses of the stomach," and vague pains difficult to locate with any exactness, believed in O'Grady as they believed in no other doctor. The secret of his successful treatment of such cases lay in his plan of giving bottles of highly coloured, strong-smelling, violently flavoured medicine, and never giving the same kind of medicine two weeks running. He also called the diseases from which the old people suffered by long names, derived from the Greek and ending in *itis*, names very comforting to the sufferers. Having studied the human body, he knew that no medicine, unless it is a virulent poison, makes much difference to a chronic invalid either one way or the other. And, having spent years studying the psychology of the Irish people, he knew that nothing is more pleasing to a patient than to have his disease given a name which he has never heard before. Such a name carries with it a suggestion that the case is obscure and unusual, perhaps unique, and while we all crave for distinction most of us have little hope of attaining it unless we succeed in cultivating a distinctive disease.

O'Grady was still compounding bottles for his 'chronics' at one o'clock when a groom from Rathconnell Castle rode up to the door of the dispensary with a note.

It was from Lord Rathconnell, and contained serious news.

The cook, so my wife tells me, insists on getting out of bed this afternoon. Her resolve does her the greatest credit and she deserves my thanks, for she says she will not leave it to the kitchenmaid to cook his lordship's dinner. But it places me in a difficult position. I had all arrangements made with the kitchenmaid, whose

name is either Hester or Esther, for a supply of food to be ready for the Kerrigans. But the cook is quite incorruptible. If I try to steal as much as a pound of bacon out of my own kitchen her ladyship will be informed immediately. Can you do anything to help me? It ought not to be beyond the power of medical science to give that cook a disease which will send her to bed and keep her there whether she likes it or not.

O'Grady recognized the seriousness of the situation at once. If the cook took over control of her kitchen again it would be impossible to smuggle out ham and joints of beef without Lady Rathconnell's knowledge. He could not bear to think of Sybil Mainwaring living on the food supplied by the Kerrigans, though he had no doubt she would try, such was her enthusiasm for arriving at the knowledge of the soul of Ireland. Besides, Kerrigan would certainly not keep her for twenty-four hours unless he was supplied with the food promised from the Castle.

"Damn that cook," he said, "I distinctly told her to stay in bed till I saw her again."

The chronic invalid who was waiting beside him for her medicine was startled at the doctor's sudden outburst. She would have been more startled if she had understood the reckless way in which he mixed incompatible drugs in the bottle he gave her. But, though he hurried through his ministrations to his remaining patients and barely scratched the arm of the one baby brought to him for vaccination, he was not a man to be unduly hustled. He went into his house and ate the chop and rice pudding provided for his dinner by his housekeeper. He even smoked a cigarette before he mounted his bicycle and rode up again to Rathconnell Castle.

As he passed through the yard to reach the back

entrance of the Castle, he caught sight of Lord Rathconnell. The old gentleman and his gamekeeper were standing together near the dog-kennels, discussing the case of a young Labrador retriever which was suffering from distemper. O'Grady interrupted him without hesitation, and drew Lord Rathconnell away out of earshot of the gamekeeper.

"Before I go and bully that cook of yours," he said, "I'd like to know what her ladyship thinks about the matter. Does she approve of the woman getting out of bed?"

"I'm afraid she does," said Lord Rathconnell; "she seems to think that there's nothing much the matter with the foot, and she doesn't trust the kitchenmaid."

O'Grady entirely agreed with Lady Rathconnell. The cook's foot was only slightly scalded and she was perfectly well able to limp about. The kitchenmaid was evidently quite untrustworthy. But he realized that it would not be easy to get the woman to go to bed again if she had Lady Rathconnell's backing in getting up.

"That's awkward," he said.

"The only thing for you to do," said Lord Rathconnell, "is to give the woman a dose of poison of some sort. I don't suggest a fatal dose. You might get into trouble if you did that. Besides, it would be a pity to kill her, for she's a very good cook. Just give her enough arsenic or prussic acid to bring on some really nasty pains, so that she'll want to go to bed and stay there. The fact is we've got to get rid of her for the next few days somehow or other, or else she'll give our whole plan away. Do you think you can manage that?"

"I'll manage her all right," said O'Grady, "don't you worry. My real difficulty will be her ladyship."

You see she knows nearly as much about doctoring as I do myself, and there'd be no earthly use my telling her that gangrene is developing in the cook's foot. I might bluff Mrs McCann into believing that, but I shouldn't take in her ladyship for a single minute."

"I don't think the cook would believe you either," said Lord Rathconnell, "she comes from Belfast, that woman, and they're a hard-headed lot up there, and as obstinate as pigs. Nothing you can do in the way of promises or threats will have the slightest effect on her, once she's made up her mind. You'll either have to let her go her own way or else give her something that will tie her up into knots. That's the only possible way of dealing with those North of Ireland people."

"I don't want to be reduced to arsenic if I can help it," said O'Grady, "but I may have to fall back on something of the sort. One thing is quite clear—we can't allow Miss Mainwaring to starve. And we mustn't let her be disappointed. She was delighted with the look of the Kerrigans' house this morning when she saw it and she's looking forward to her time there greatly. Some men might call it unprofessional conduct and make a fuss about it. I dare say I might be reported to the Medical Association if I was caught. But I'd rather poison half a dozen cooks than disappoint Miss Mainwaring and deprive her of what is, after all, a perfectly innocent pleasure."

"My wife doesn't regard it as an innocent pleasure at all," said Lord Rathconnell. "She and Sybil were arguing all through lunch. They're arguing still I expect."

"But Lady Rathconnell has agreed to her going," said O'Grady, "there's no use arguing about it now."

"Oh, yes, she agreed all right. But you know how it is, O'Grady, with these good women like my wife.

They can't help explaining how wrong things are even when they've agreed to do them."

"Well," said O'Grady, "I've got to deal with the cook, anyhow, and I suppose I'd better see her ladyship afterwards."

He crossed the yard and entered the long stone-floored passage which led past the servants' hall, the butler's pantry and several storerooms to the kitchen. There he found the cook. Her foot was swathed in bandages, and she was limping about with the aid of a stick. The kitchenmaid was seated on a low stool near the scullery sink. She had her apron over her face and was weeping bitterly. O'Grady was quite pleased when he noticed the condition of the girl. It seemed to him that the cook's temper must be very bad indeed, and that led him to think that she must be suffering some pain with her foot.

"Good evening, Mrs McCann," he said, "I thought I told you to stay in bed till I saw you again."

O'Grady spoke in a tone of authority. It is only doctors nowadays who dare speak to us and give us orders in this absolute way, expecting implicit obedience. Once, long ago, kings could do it, and there was a time when priests used to issue commands even to kings themselves. But there always were in the world a few rebels and heretics who ignored the power of kings and priests. There are to-day a handful of independent people who are not frightened by doctors, even by specialists. Lord Rathconnell's cook was one of them.

"And if I was to stay in my bed," she said, "who'd cook his lordship's dinner to-night? Do you think that the likes of that one?" She pointed to the weeping Hester with her thumb. "Do you think that the likes of that one could send up so much as a boiled potato fit for his lordship to eat?"

O'Grady was far too wise a man to involve himself in an argument with the cook about boiled potatoes or kitchenmaids.

"Sit down on that chair," he said, "and let me have a look at the foot."

The cook, such is the astonishing influence of authority which assumes the right to command, obeyed him at once. She sat down on the chair near the fire, and O'Grady removed the bandages from her foot.

"Any pain?" he asked.

Mrs McCann suffered a good deal of pain. However carefully and tenderly bandages are stripped from a scalded foot there is sure to be some pain. But she was a very courageous woman and she was determined not to hand over the control of her kitchen to the weeping Hester. She screwed her lips tightly and shut her eyes, but she answered the doctor bravely.

"No, doctor," she said, "there's no pain in it."

Dr O'Grady looked exceedingly grave.

"The great danger in these cases," he said, "what we have to guard against with special care, is septicemia."

'Septicemia' is a five-syllabled word and unlike Mesopotamia it brings no comfort to the mind of anyone who hears it. O'Grady glanced at the cook to see how she was taking it. She seemed quite unimpressed. She was, in fact, a very skilful and scientific cook who had gone through a course of training in a technical school. While there she had studied several small books about food values and had become accustomed to words like calories and even vitamins. She knew that they had little or nothing to do with the art of preparing food for human consumption. She was thus better able than most women to keep her head in the face of a threatening and terrific word like 'septicemia.' But though Mrs McCann remained unimpressed the word

had a great effect on the kitchenmaid. Hester stopped crying and came cautiously into the kitchen. She wished to be in a position to see the septicemia, whatever it was, smiting the woman who had bullied her. She no doubt looked forward to gloating afterwards over the cook's agony.

"Will you go back to your work, Hester?" said Mrs McCann. "Do you think them vegetables will wash themselves while you're running in where you're not wanted? I never in my life saw such an idle, useless girl as what you are. God help the man that marries you."

"No pain at all?" said O'Grady again, poking at a tender spot with his forefinger.

"There is not," said the cook.

"Ah," said O'Grady gravely. "Now tell me this. Is there any tendency in your family to tubercular meningitis?"

"My poor mother suffers from a weak heart," said the cook.

She was no more frightened by the sound of 'tubercular meningitis' than she had been by the five syllables of 'septicemia.' But she thought it might be wise to confess the state of her mother's heart.

Dr O'Grady was kneeling in front of the foot, which rested on a chair. When he heard about the cook's mother's weak heart, he stood up with the air of a man who has finally made up his mind on a difficult matter. He took his stand with his back to the kitchen range and thrust his hands deep into his breeches' pockets.

"Speaking as a medical man," he said, "and believing as I do in perfect frankness with my patients, I think I ought to tell you that I should be a great deal better satisfied if you were suffering a little pain. The complete absence of pain is a most disquieting

symptom, though it may very well delude you into thinking that there is nothing particular wrong."

Mrs McCann was not in the least uneasy. The doctor was speaking very gravely indeed; but since she really had a good deal of pain the gravity of the symptom did not frighten her. She felt, however, that it was only right to relieve the doctor's mind a little.

"When I told you that I wasn't suffering, doctor," she said, "I was only meaning to say——"

O'Grady did not appear to be listening to her. He muttered the word 'sclerosis.' The tone in which he said it was very low, but Mrs McCann heard the word, as indeed she was meant to.

"Sclerosis or no sclerosis," she said, "I'm meaning to cook his lordship's dinner for him the night and if you have to cut the foot off me after I can't help it."

O'Grady recognized that it was no use trying to frighten Mrs McCann to bed. A woman who could survive the threat of septicemia, tubercular meningitis, and sclerosis was not likely to quail before any word in a medical dictionary. But he was not yet reduced to the desperate expedient of a dose of arsenic, which indeed he might have great difficulty in persuading Mrs McCann to swallow. He laid aside the pontifical manner he had adopted when naming terrific diseases and became suddenly confidential.

"I suppose you know," he said, "that his lordship has you insured against accidents."

"I wouldn't call a sup of hot water on my foot an accident," said Mrs McCann.

"His lordship has been paying premiums for years and years," said O'Grady, "and he's never had a chance of getting a penny back out of the insurance company yet. That seems a pity, doesn't it?"

"It's an awful loss of good money," said Mrs McCann.

"Now if you did have an accident, a really serious scald or something of that sort, I could write out a certificate that you were under medical treatment and his lordship would get ten pounds out of the insurance company at the very least. What's more, I'd get fees up to five pounds for attending you. That would be found money for me, Mrs McCann, and found money for his lordship, but as things are with you limping about the kitchen and cooking the dinner as well as ever you did we shan't get a penny out of that insurance company, and, of course, I can't charge his lordship anything for coming up here to see you when you're not ill. That'll be a loss to me and, to tell you the truth, I'm not very well able to afford it."

"If I was to go to my bed," said Mrs McCann, "would his lordship get ten pounds?"

"Ten pounds for certain," said O'Grady, "probably much more. It depends how long you stay in bed. We might make it up to twenty pounds or twenty-five pounds."

"And would there be five pounds coming to you, doctor?"

"There would. And I may tell you, Mrs McCann, I want five pounds badly."

"If that's the way of it, doctor, I'll get to my bed of course, only why didn't you tell me that same instead of trying to frighten me with tales of sclerosis and the like; sure if his lordship gets no dinner—and it's likely he won't—he'll be getting a good price for going without it."

She wrapped the bandages round her foot as she spoke.

"Hester," she said, "will you try and remember the bread sauce for the chicken and don't you be frying the sole until you have the grease boiling in the pan, and it

would be better for you not to be trying to make a savoury at all. But what's the good of talking to a girl like you? "

She took her stick, scrambled to her feet, and limped off to bed.

From " Send for Dr O'Grady "

THE STORY OF THE WILLOW PLATE EMBELLISHMENT

ERNEST BRAMAH

WONG TS'IN, the rich porcelain-maker, was ill at ease within himself. He had partaken of his customary midday meal, flavoured the repast by unsealing a jar of matured wine, consumed a little fruit, a few sweetmeats, and half a dozen cups of unapproachable tea, and then retired to an inner chamber to contemplate philosophically from the reposeful attitude of a reclining couch.

But upon this occasion the merchant did not contemplate restfully. He paced the floor in deep dejection, and when he did use the couch at all it was to roll upon it in a sudden access of internal pain. The cause of his distress was well known to the unhappy person thus concerned, nor did it lessen the pangs of his emotion that it arose entirely from his own ill-considered action.

When Wong Ts'in had discovered, by the side of a remote and obscure river, the inexhaustible bed of porcelain clay that ensured his prosperity, his first care was to erect adequate sheds and labouring places; his next to build a house sufficient for himself and those in attendance round about him.

So far prudence had ruled his actions, for there is a keen edge to the saying, "He who sleeps over his workshop brings four eyes into the business," but in one detail Wong Ts'in's head and feet went on different journeys, for with incredible oversight he omitted to secure the experience of competent astrologers and omen-casters in fixing the exact site of his mansion.

The result was what might have been expected. In excavating for the foundations Wong Ts'in's slaves disturbed the repose of a small but rapacious earth-demon that had already been sleeping there for nine hundred and ninety-nine years. With the insatiable cunning of its kind, this vindictive creature waited until the house was completed and then proceeded to transfer its unseen but formidable presence to the quarters that were designed for Wong Ts'in himself. Thenceforth, from time to time, it continued to revenge itself for the trouble to which it had been put by an insidious persecution. This frequently took the form of fastening its claws upon the merchant's digestive organs, especially after he had partaken of an unusually rich repast (for in some way the display of certain viands excited its unreasoning animosity), pressing heavily upon his chest, invading his repose with dragon-dreams while he slept, and the like. Only by the exercise of an ingenuity greater than its own could Wong Ts'in succeed in baffling its ill-conditional spite.

On this occasion, recognizing from the nature of his pangs what was taking place, Wong Ts'in resorted to a stratagem that rarely failed him. Announcing in a loud voice that it was his intention to refresh the surface of his body by the purifying action of heated vapour, and then to proceed to his mixing floor, the merchant withdrew. The demon, being an earth-dweller with the ineradicable objection of this class of creatures towards all the elements of moisture, at once relinquished its hold, and going direct to the part of the works indicated, it there awaited its victim with the intention of resuming its discreditable persecution.

Wong Ts'in had spoken with a double tongue. On leaving the inner chamber he quickly traversed certain obscure passages of his house until he reached an

inferior portal. Even if the demon had suspected his purpose it would not have occurred to a creature of its narrow outlook that anyone of Wong Ts'in's importance would make use of so menial an outway. The merchant therefore reached his garden unperceived, and thenceforward maintained an undeviating face in the direction of the Outer Expanses. Before he had covered many li he was assured that he had indeed succeeded for the time in shaking off his unscrupulous tormentor. His internal organs again resumed their habitual calm and his mind was lightened as from an overhanging cloud.

There was another reason why Wong Ts'in sought the solitude of the thinly peopled outer places, away from the influence and distraction of his own estate. For some time past a problem that had once been remote was assuming dimensions of increasing urgency. This detail concerns Fa Fai, who had already been referred to by a person of literary distinction, in a poetical analogy occupying three written volumes, as a pearl-tinted peach-blossom shielded and restrained by the silken network of wise parental affection (and, recognizing the justice of the comparison, Wong Ts'in had been induced to purchase the work in question). Now that Fa Fai had attained an age when she could fittingly be sought in marriage, the contingency might occur at any time, and the problem confronting her father's decision was this: owing to her incomparable perfection Fa Fai must be accounted one of Wong Ts'in's chief possessions, the other undoubtedly being his secret process of simulating the lustrous effect of pure gold embellishment on china by the application of a much less expensive substitute. Would it be more prudent to concentrate the power of both influences and let it become known that with Fa Fai would go the

essential part of his very remunerative clay enterprise, or would it be more prudent to divide these attractions and secure two distinct influences, both concerned about his welfare? In the first case there need be no reasonable limit to the extending vista of his ambition, and he might even aspire to greet as a son the highest functionary of the province—an official of such heavily sustained importance that when he went about it required six chosen slaves to carry him, and of late it had been considered more prudent to employ eight.

If, on the other hand, Fa Fai went without any added inducement, a mandarin of moderate rank would probably be as high as Wong Ts'in could look, but he would certainly be able to adopt another of at least equal position, at the price of making over to him the ultimate benefit of his discovery. He could thus acquire either two sons of reasonable influence, or one who exercised almost unlimited authority. In view of his own childlessness, and of his final dependence on the services of others, which arrangement promised the most regular and liberal transmission of supplies to his expectant spirit when he had passed into the Upper Air, and would his connection with one very important official or with two subordinate ones secure him the greater amount of honour and serviceable recognition among the more useful deities?

To Wong Ts'in's logical mind it seemed as though there must be a definite answer to this problem. If one manner of behaving was right the other must be wrong, for as the wise philosopher Ning-hy was wont to say, "Where the road divides, there stand two Ning-hys." The decision on a matter so essential to his future comfort ought not to be left to chance. Thus it had become a habit of Wong Ts'in's to pene-

trate the Outer Spaces in the hope of there encountering a specific omen.

Alas, it has been well written, "He who thinks that he is raising a mound may only in reality be digging a pit." In his continual search for a celestial portent among the solitudes Wong Ts'in had of late necessarily somewhat neglected his earthly (as it may thus be expressed) interests. In these emergencies certain of the more turbulent among his workers had banded themselves together into a confederacy under the leadership of a craftsman named Fang. It was the custom of these men, who wore a badge and recognized a mutual oath and imprecation, to present themselves suddenly before Wong Ts'in and demand a greater reward for their exertions than they had previously agreed to, threatening that unless this was accorded they would cast down the implements of their labour in unison and involve in idleness those who otherwise would have continued at their task. This menace Wong Ts'in bought off from time to time by agreeing to their exactions, but it began presently to appear that this way of appeasing them resembled Chou Hong's method of extinguishing a fire by directing jets of wind against it. On the day with which this related story has so far concerned itself, a band of the most highly remunerated and privileged of the craftsmen had appeared before Wong Ts'in with the intolerable Fang at their head. These men were they whose skill enabled them laboriously to copy upon the surfaces of porcelain a given scene without appreciable deviation from one to the other, for in those remote cycles of history no other method was yet known or even dreamed of.

"Suitable greetings, employer of our worthless services," remarked their leader, seating himself upon the floor unbidden. "These who speak through the mouth

of the cringing mendicant before you are the Bound-together Brotherhood of Colour-mixers and Putters-on of Thought-out Designs, bent upon a just cause."

"May their Ancestral Tablets never fall into disrepair," replied Wong Ts'in courteously. "For the rest—let the mouth referred to shape itself into the likeness of a narrow funnel, for the lengthening gong-strokes press round about my unfinished labours."

"That which in justice requires the amplitude of a full-sized cask shall be pressed down into the confines of an inadequate vessel," assented Fang. "Know then, O battener upon our ill-requited skill, how it has come to our knowledge that one who is not of our Brotherhood moves among us and performs an equal task for a less reward. This is our spoken word in consequence; in place of one tael every man among us shall now take two, and he who before has laboured eight gongs to receive it shall henceforth labour four. Furthermore, he who is speaking shall, as their recognized head and authority, always be addressed by the honourable title of 'Polished,' and the dog who is not one of us shall be cast forth."

"My hand itches to reward you in accordance with the inner prompting of a full heart," replied the merchant, after a well-sustained pause. "But in this matter my very deficient ears must be leading my threadbare mind astray. The moon has not been eaten up since the day when you stood before me in a like attitude and bargained that every man should henceforth receive a full tael where hitherto a half had been his portion, and that in place of the toil of sixteen gong-strokes eight should suffice. Upon this being granted all bound themselves by spoken word that the matter should stand thus and thus between us until the gathering-in of the next rice harvest."

"That may have been so at the time," admitted Fang, with dog-like obstinacy, "but it was not then known that you had pledged yourself to Hien Nan for ten score embellished plates of porcelain within a stated time, and that our services would therefore be essential to your reputation. There has thus arisen what may be regarded as a new vista of eventualities, and this frees us from the bondage of our spoken word. Having thus moderately stated our unbending demand, we will depart until the like gong-stroke of to-morrow, when, if our claim be not agreed to, all will cast down their implements of labour with the swiftness of a lightning-flash, and thereby involve the whole of your too-profitable undertaking in well-merited stagnation. We go, venerable head; auspicious omens attend your movements!"

"May the All-seeing guide your footsteps," responded Wong Ts'in, and with courteous forbearance he waited until they were out of hearing before he added—"into a vat of boiling sulphur!"

Thus may the position be outlined when Wei Chang, the unassuming youth whom the black-hearted Fang had branded with so degrading a comparison, sat at his appointed place rather than join in the discreditable conspiracy, and strove by his unaided dexterity to enable Wong Ts'in to complete the ten score embellished plates by the appointed time. Yet already he knew that in this commendable ambition his head grew larger than his hands, for he was the slowest-working among all Wong Ts'in's craftsmen, and even then his copy could frequently be detected from the original. Not to overwhelm his memory with unmerited contempt it is fitting now to reveal somewhat more of the unfolding curtain of events.

Wei Chang was not in reality a worker in the art of

applying coloured designs to porcelain at all. He was a student of the literary excellences, and had decided to devote his entire life to the engaging task of reducing the most perfectly matched analogy to the least possible number of words when the unexpected appearance of Fa Fai unsettled his ambitions. She was restraining the impatience of a powerful horse and controlling its movements by means of a leather thong, while at the same time she surveyed the landscape with a disinterested glance in which Wei Chang found himself becoming involved. Without stopping even to consult the spirits of his revered ancestors on so important a decision, he at once burned the greater part of his collection of classical analogies and engaged himself, as one who is willing to become more proficient, about Wong Ts'in's earth-yards. Here, without any reasonable intention of ever becoming in any way personally congenial to her, he was in a position occasionally to see the distant outline of Fa Fai's movements, and when a day passed and even this was withheld he was content that the shadow of the many-pagodaed building that contained her should obscure the sunlight from the window before which he worked.

While Wei Chang was thus engaged the door of the enclosure in which he laboured was thrust cautiously inwards, and presently he became aware that the being whose individuality was never completely absent from his thoughts was standing in an expectant attitude at no great distance from him. As no other person was present, the craftsmen having departed in order to consult an oracle that dwelt beneath an appropriate sign, and Wong Ts'in being by this time among the Outer Ways seeking an omen as to Fa Fai's disposal, Wei Chang did not think it respectful to become aware of the maiden's presence until a persistent

distress of her throat compelled him to recognize the incident.

"Unapproachable perfection," he said, with becoming deference, "is it permissible that in the absence of your enlightened sire you should descend from your golden eminence and stand, entirely unattended, at no great distance from so ordinary a person as myself?"

"Whether it may be strictly permissible or not, it is only on like occasions that she ever has the opportunity of descending from the solitary pinnacle referred to," replied Fa Fai, not only with no outward appearance of alarm at being directly addressed by one of a different sex, but even moving nearer to Wei Chang as she spoke. "A more essential detail in the circumstances concerns the length of time that he may be prudently relied upon to be away!"

"Doubtless several gong-strokes will intervene before his returning footsteps gladden our expectant vision," replied Wei Chang. "He is spoken of as having set his face towards the Outer Ways, there perchance to come within the influence of a portent."

"Its probable object is not altogether unknown to the one who stands before you," admitted Fa Fai, "and as a dutiful and affectionate daughter it has become a consideration with her whether she ought not to press forward, as it were, to a solution on her own account. . . . If the one whom I am addressing could divert his attention from the embellishment of the very inadequate claw of a wholly superfluous winged dragon, possibly he might add his sage counsel on that point."

"It is said that a bull-frog once rent his throat in a well-meant endeavour to advise an eagle in the art of flying," replied Wei Chang, concealing the bitterness of his heart beneath an easy tongue. "For this reason

it is inexpedient for earthlings to fix their eyes on those who dwell in very high places."

"To the intrepid, very high places exist solely to be scaled; with others, however, the only scaling they attempt is lavished on the armour of preposterous flying monsters, O youth of the House of Wei!"

"Is it possible," exclaimed Wei Chang, moving forward with so sudden an ardour that the maiden hastily withdrew herself several paces from beyond his enthusiasm, "is it possible that this person's hitherto obscure and execrated name is indeed known to your incomparable lips?"

"As the one who periodically casts up the computations of the sums of money due to those who labour about the earth-yards, it would be strange if the name had so far escaped my notice," replied Fa Fai, with a distance in her voice that the few paces between them very inadequately represented. "Certain details engrave themselves upon the tablets of recollection by their persistence. For instance, the name of Fang is generally at the head of each list; that of Wei Chang is invariably at the foot."

"It is undeniable," admitted Wei Chang, in a tone of well-merited humiliation; "and the attainment of never having yet applied a design in such a manner that the copy might be mistaken for the original has entirely flattened out this person's self-esteem."

"Doubtless," suggested Fa Fai, with delicate encouragement, "there are other pursuits in which you would disclose a more highly developed proficiency—as that of watching the gyrations of untamed horses, for example. Our more immediate need, however, is to discover a means of defeating the malignity of the detestable Fang. With this object I have for some time past secretly applied myself to the task of con-

triving a design which, by blending simplicity with picturesque effect, will enable one person in a given length of time to achieve the amount of work hitherto done by two."

With these auspicious words the accomplished maiden disclosed a plate of translucent porcelain, embellished in the manner which she had described. At the sight of the ingenious way in which trees and persons, streams and buildings, and objects of a widely differing nature had been so arranged as to give the impression that they all existed at the same time, and were equally visible without undue exertion on the part of the spectator who regarded them, Wei Chang could not restrain an exclamation of delight.

"How cunningly imagined is the device by which objects so varied in size as an orange and an island can be depicted within the narrow compass of a porcelain plate without the larger one completely obliterating the smaller or the smaller becoming actually invisible by comparison with the other! Hitherto this unimaginative person had not considered the possibility of depicting other than dragons, demons, spirits, and the forces which from their celestial nature may be regarded as possessing no real thickness or substance and therefore being particularly suitable for treatment on a flat surface. But this engaging display might indeed be a scene having an actual existence at no great space away."

"Such is assuredly the case," admitted Fa Fai. "Within certain limitations, imposed by this new art of depicting realities as they are, we may be regarded as standing before an open window. The important-looking building on the right is that erected by this person's venerated father. Its prosperity is indicated by the luxurious profusion of the fruit-tree overhanging

it. Pressed somewhat to the back, but of dignified proportion, are the outer buildings of those who labour among the clay."

"In a state of actuality, they are of measurably less dignified dimensions," suggested Wei Chang.

"The objection is inept," replied Fa Fai. "The buildings in question undoubtedly exist at the indicated position. If, therefore, the actuality is to be maintained, it is necessary either to raise their stature or to cut down the trees obscuring them. To this gentle-minded person the former alternative seemed the less drastic. As, however, it is regarded in a spirit of no-satisfaction——"

"Proceed, incomparable one, proceed," implored Wei Chang. "It was but a breath of thought, arising from a recollection of the many times that this incapable person has struck his unworthy head against the roof-beams of those nobly proportioned buildings."

"The three stunted individuals crossing the bridge in undignified attitudes are the debased Fang and two of his mercenary accomplices. They are, as usual, bending their footsteps in the direction of the hospitality of a house that announces its purpose beneath the sign of a spreading bush. They are positioned as crossing the river to a set purpose, and the bridge is devoid of a rail in the hope that on their return they may all fall into the torrent in a helpless condition and be drowned, to the satisfaction of the beholders."

"It would be a fitting conclusion to their ill-spent lives," agreed Wei Chang. "Would it not add to their indignity to depict them as struggling beneath the wave?"

"It might so do," admitted Fa Fai graciously, "but in order to express the arisement adequately it would be necessary to display them twice—first on the bridge

with their faces turned towards the west, and then in the flood with their faces towards the east; and the superficial might hastily assume that the three on the bridge would rescue the three in the river."

"You are all-wise," said Wei Chang, with well-marked admiration in his voice. "This person's suggestion was opaque."

"In any case," continued Fa Fai, with a reassuring glance, "it is a detail that is not essential to the frustration of Fang's malignant scheme, for, already well on its way towards Hien Nan, may be seen a trustworthy junk, laden with two formidable crates, each one containing five score plates of the justly esteemed Wong Ts'in porcelain."

"Nevertheless," maintained Wei Chang mildly, "the out-passing of Fang would have been a satisfactory detail of the occurrence."

"Do not despair," replied Fa Fai. "Not idly is it written, 'Destiny has four feet, eight hands, and sixteen eyes: how then shall the ill-doer with only two of each hope to escape?' An even more ignominious end may await Fang, should he escape drowning, for, conveniently placed by the side of the stream, this person has introduced a spreading willow-tree. Any of its lower branches is capable of sustaining Fang's weight, should a reliable rope connect the two."

"There is something about that which this person now learns is a willow that distinguishes it above all the other trees of the design," remarked Wei Chang admiringly. "It has a wild and yet a romantic aspect."

"This person had not yet chanced upon a suitable title for the device," said Fa Fai, "and a distinguishing name is necessary, for possibly scores of copies may be made before its utility is exhausted. Your

discriminating praise shall be accepted as a fortunate omen, and henceforth this shall be known as the Willow Pattern Embellishment."

"The honour of suggesting the title is more than this commonplace person can reasonably carry," protested Wei Chang, feeling that very little worth considering existed outside the earth-shed. "Not only scores, but even hundreds of copies may be required in the process of time, for a crust of rice-bread and a handful of dried figs eaten from such a plate would be more satisfying than a repast of many-coursed richness elsewhere."

In this well-sustained and painless manner Fa Fai and Wei Chang continued to express themselves agreeably to each other, until the lengthening gong-strokes warned the former person that her absence might inconvenience Wong Ts'in's sense of tranquillity on his return, nor did Wei Chang contest the desirability of a greater space intervening between them should the merchant chance to pass that way. In the meanwhile Chang had explained many of the inner details of his craft so that Fa Fai should the better understand the requirements of her new art.

"Yet where is the Willow plate itself?" said the maiden, as she began to arrange her mind towards departure. "As the colours were still in a receptive state this person placed it safely aside for the time. It was somewhat near the spot where you——"

During the amiable exchange of shafts of polished conversation Wei Chang had followed Fa Fai's indication and had seated himself upon a low bench without any very definite perception of his movements. He now arose with the unstudied haste of one who has inconvenienced a scorpion.

"Alas!" he exclaimed, in a tone of the acutest

mental distress; "can it be possible that this utterly profane outcast has so desecrated——"

"Certainly comment of an admittedly crushing nature has been imposed upon this person's well-meant handiwork," said Fa Fai. With these lightly barbed words, which were plainly devised to restore the other person's face towards himself, the magnanimous maiden examined the plate which Wei Chang's uprising had revealed.

"Not only has the embellishment suffered no real detriment," she continued, after an adequate glance, "but there has been imparted to the higher lights—doubtless owing to the nature of the fabric in which your lower half is encased—a certain nebulous quality that adds greatly to the successful effect of the various tones."

At the first perception of the indignity to which he had subjected the entrancing Fa Fai's work, and the swift feeling that much more than the coloured adornment of a plate would thereby be destroyed, all power of retention had forsaken Wei Chang's incapable knees and he sank down heavily upon another bench. From this dejection the maiden's well-chosen encouragement recalled him to a position of ordinary uprightness.

"A tombstone is lifted from this person's mind by your gracefully placed words," he declared, and he was continuing to indicate the nature of his self-reproach by means of a suitable analogy when the expression of Fa Fai's eyes turned him to a point behind himself. There, lying on the spot from which he had just risen, was a second Willow plate, differing in no detail of resemblance from the first.

"Shadow of the Great Image!" exclaimed Chang, in an awe-filled voice. "It is no marvel that miracles should attend your footsteps, celestial one, but it is

incredible that this clay-souled person should be involved in the display."

"Yet," declared Fa Fai, not hesitating to allude to things as they existed, in the highly raised stress of the discovery, "it would appear that the miracle is not specifically connected with this person's feet. Would you not, in furtherance of this line of suggestion, place yourself in a similar attitude on yet another plate, Wei Chang?"

Not without many protests that it was scarcely becoming thus to sit repeatedly in her presence, Chang complied with the request, and upon Fa Fai's further insistence he continued to impress himself, as it were, upon a succession of porcelain plates, with a like result. Not until the eleventh process was reached did the Willow design begin to lose its potency.

"Ten perfect copies produced within as many moments, and not one distinguishable from the first!" exclaimed Wei Chang, regarding the array of plates with pleasurable emotion. "Here is a means of baffling Fang's crafty confederacy that will fill Wong Ts'in's ears with waves of gladness on his return."

"Doubtless," agreed Fa Fai, with a dark intent. She was standing by the door of the enclosure in the process of making her departure, and she regarded Wei Chang with a set deliberation. "Yet," she continued definitely, "if this person possessed that which was essential to Wong Ts'in's prosperity, and Wong Ts'in held that which was necessary for this one's tranquillity, a locked bolt would be upon the one until the other was pledged in return."

With these opportune words the maiden vanished, leaving Wei Chang prostrating himself in spirit before the manysidedness of her wisdom.

Wong Ts'in was not altogether benevolently inclined

towards the universe on his return a little later. The persistent image of Fang's overthreatening act still corroded the merchant's throat with bitterness, for on his right he saw the extinction of his business as unremunerative if he agreed, and on his left he saw the extinction of his business as undependable if he refused to agree.

Furthermore, the omens were ill-arranged.

On his way outwards he had encountered an aged man who possessed two fruit-trees, on which he relied for sustenance. As Wong Ts'in drew near, this venerable person carried from his dwelling two beaten cakes of dog-dung and began to bury them about the root of the larger tree. This action, on the part of one who might easily be a disguised wizard, aroused Wong Ts'in's interest.

"Why," he demanded, "having two cakes of dung and two fruit-trees, do you not allot one to each tree, so that both may benefit and return to you their produce in the time of your necessity?"

"The season promises to be one of rigour and great need," replied the other. "A single cake of dung might not provide sufficient nourishment for either tree, so that both should wither away. By reducing life to a bare necessity I could pass from one harvest to another on the fruit of this tree alone, but if both should fail I am undone. To this end I safeguard my existence by ensuring that at least the better of the two shall thrive."

"Peace attend your efforts!" said Wong Ts'in, and he began to retrace his footsteps, well content.

Yet he had not covered half the distance back when his progress was impeded by an elderly hag who fed two goats, whose milk alone preserved her from starvation. One small measure of dry grass was all that she

was able to provide them with, but she divided it equally between them, to the discontent of both.

"The season promises to be one of rigour and great need," remarked Wong Ts'in affably, for the being before him might well be a creature of another part who had assumed that form for his guidance. "Why do you not therefore ensure sustenance to the better of the two goats by devoting to it the whole of the measure of dry grass? In this way you would receive at least some nourishment in return and thereby safeguard your own existence until the rice is grown again."

"In the matter of the two goats," replied the aged hag, "there is no better, both being equally stubborn and perverse, though one may be finer-looking and more vainglorious than the other. Yet should I foster this one to the detriment of her fellow, what would be this person's plight if haply the weaker died and the stronger broke away and fled! By treating both alike I retain a double thread on life, even if neither is capable of much."

"May the Unseen weigh your labours!" exclaimed Wong Ts'in in a two-edged voice, and he departed.

When he reached his house he would have closed himself in his own chamber with himself had not Wei Chang persisted that he sought his master's inner ear with a heavy project. This interruption did not please Wong Ts'in, for he had begun to recognize the day as being unlucky, yet Chang succeeded by a device in reaching his side, bearing in his hands a guarded burden.

Though no written record of this memorable interview exists, it is now generally admitted that Wei Chang either involved himself in an unbearably attenuated caution before he would reveal his errand, or else that he made a definite allusion to Fa Fai with a too sudden

conciseness, for the slaves who stood without heard Wong Ts'in clear his voice of all restraint and express himself freely on a variety of subjects. But this gave place to a subdued murmur, ending with the ceremonial breaking of a plate, and later Wong Ts'in beat upon a silver bell and called for wine and fruit.

The next day Fang presented himself a few gong-strokes later than the appointed time, and being met by an unbending word he withdrew the labour of those whom he controlled. Thenceforth these men, providing themselves with knives and axes, surrounded the gate of the earth-yards and by the pacific argument of their attitudes succeeded in persuading others who would willingly have continued at their task that the air of Wong Ts'in's sheds was not congenial to their health. Towards Wei Chang, whose efforts they despised, they raised a cloud of derision, and presently noticing that henceforth he invariably clad himself in lower garments of a dark blue material (to a set purpose that will be as crystal to the sagacious), they greeted his appearance with cries of, "Behold the sombre one! Thou dark leg!" so that this reproach continues to be hurled even to this day at those in a like case, though few could answer why.

Long before the appointed time the ten score plates were delivered to Hien Nan. So greatly were they esteemed, both on account of their accuracy of unvarying detail and the ingenuity of their novel embellishment, that orders for scores, hundreds, and even thousands began to arrive from all quarters of the Empire. The clay enterprise of Wong Ts'in took upon itself an added lustre, and in order to deal adequately with so vast an undertaking the grateful merchant adopted Wei Chang and placed him upon an equal footing with himself. On the same day Wong Ts'in honourably

fulfilled his spoken word, and the marriage of Wei Chang and Fa Fai took place, accompanied by the most lavish display of fireworks and coloured lights that the province had ever seen. The controlling deities approved, and they had seven sons, one of whom had seven fingers upon each hand. All these sons became expert in Wei Chang's process of transferring porcelain embellishment, for some centuries elapsed before it was discovered that it was not absolutely necessary to sit upon each plate to produce the desired effect.

This chronicle of an event that is now regarded as almost classical would not be complete without an added reference to the ultimate end of the sordid Fang.

Fallen into disrepute among his fellows owing to the evil plight towards which he had enticed them, it became his increasing purpose to frequent the house beyond the river. On his return at nightfall he invariably turned aside on reaching the bridge, well knowing that he could not prudently rely upon his feet among so insecure a crossing, and composed himself to sleep among the rushes. While in this position one night he was discovered and pushed into the river by a devout ox (an instrument of the high destinies), where he perished incapably.

Those who found his body, not being able to withdraw so formidable a weight direct, cast a rope across the lower branch of a convenient willow-tree and thus raised it to the shore. In this striking manner Fa Fai's definite opinion achieved a destined end.

From " Kai Lung's Golden Hours "

OF MY SO-CALLED PAINTING

WILLIAM CAINE

I HAVE not said very much hitherto about my painting propensity. The truth is I am less fond of the subject than I used to be.

Two short years ago I talked of nothing else, and could never rest until visitors had asked to see my sketches. If they didn't do it within ten minutes of their arrival, I used to go and fetch the things and make them. Their complimentary or at least non-committal expressions were music in my ears. I could never have enough of them and very often I would show them those pictures all over again.

It is well to be grown up and have an establishment of one's own. I remember how dreadfully I used to suffer as the interest which my father's guests used to feign in my collection of postage-stamps faded away into indifference, into the scamping of pages, and finally, in the second volume, into absolute neglect of whole countries and conversation with my sisters. I don't believe I ever got one of those people so far as Australasia. But now things are different with me. These, my friends and guests, having tasted of my hospitality, are quite at my mercy. They cannot turn away from my trees and barns and whatnot and talk servants with my wife. She won't let them. She is as determined as I can possibly be that my pictures shall be honestly regarded. You would as soon find a mother willing to spare her visitors the recitations of her little child.

But lately I have been less eager to step forward with

my coloured boards. My wife's encouragement has never faltered—don't think that. It is that a conviction has been steadily growing within me that these paintings are not all that I have supposed. I now realize that I paint very badly indeed, that it is better to burn these pictures than to force them on the acceptance of my friends. (Ah! and I have done that too.) No longer do I place a chair and set up the poor daubs one after another in the best light. I seek rather the obscurer corners of the room for my exhibitions. No longer can I take any pleasure in my results and, still worse, I cannot any longer believe that my visitors do. They are still polite—no one has actually insulted me—but I see through them as I wish I had never learned to do. I cannot now imagine them going away down the road, their mouths completely filled with the exchange of admiring observations concerning that which I have shown them. It seems to me that they only wait to turn the corner before breaking out into a competition of raillery. They must.

Yet I go on painting. I cannot stop it. The thing has become a vice with me.

And I go on showing my pictures—those at least which I do not put in the fire—to my friends. I despise myself, but still I do it. I cannot help it. I must have their praises, though these sound hollow in my ears. I can do nothing without praise and I must paint. I am a horrible example of the man who would not let well alone. I cannot now sit and worship this lovely world without being forced to blaspheme against it on paper.

If I could only have stayed in my happy ignorance!

But the penalty laid upon the dabbling painter is that he shall advance in knowledge and in power stand

still. It is a heavy penalty, but it does not by any means fit the crime.

To-day, for example, consider my experience before these budded beeches.

Two years ago I should have drawn every tree separately and painted them all simply enough with Light Red. The shadows I should have put in with Prussian Blue and the thing would have been done. And I should have been enchanted with it, and my wife would have patted me on the back, and then I should have been really pleased ; for in those days we were able to make believe that I painted beautifully. But it takes two to play a game of that kind and my wife cannot do it alone.

So, now, when I had done my worst in front of those beeches and brought it to her in the donkey-cart, I came with a lagging step and a hanging head. No longer was it mine to bound to her side, the light of creation in my eye, the outrage concealed behind my back lest she should catch any glimpse of it before it should be advantageously placed. I knew that I deserved no applause and that, because I knew it, there would be very little for me. Yet I came for what I could get, and she gave me more than she should have given. If I could only have pretended that I was proud, she would not have disappointed me. But I knew that everything—tones, values, aerial perspective, drawing, composition—words which I had barely heard two years ago—that everything was wrong, though how wrong I could only guess. And she read the knowledge in my footstep. At length she said, " I like the little stream."

Now, it was a path.

From " The New Foresters "

THE ONCE-A-YEAR CRICKETER

BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS

AT a certain period of the year almost every Englishman, regardless of his age, has to play cricket. Long and large injections of the first-class county game begin to cause attempts at emulation early in August, and when September comes nearly all have succumbed.

"I like to have just one smack every year," say some. "I rather like to show the young 'uns," say others.

Weird and wonderful games are arranged at seaside towns and on village greens. The ages of the players vary from eight to eighty. I know this because the wicket-keeper in our match this year had to lean over the wicket and hold one dear old fellow steady as each ball was sent down to him. He could not hit the first three, so he refused the services of the stumper and *knelt down* to take the bowling. As may well be guessed, he was at once stunned by a ball in the centre of the forehead.

But first let us deal with the early stages of my experience this year of that dreadful desipience, the scratch cricket-match.

"You must play," says the life and soul of the party at the hotel, first cousin to that marine horror, the life and soul of the ship. "You can field where you like. You needn't bowl and you can go in last. We simply must make up two elevens." You give your short smile and assent. You like the part about fielding where you like, but had certainly expected to bowl an

over or two, and know that you could have gone in seventh with dignity and without impudence. However . . .

My side won the toss this year and seven wickets went down for five. Then came a stand. A player in the hotel orchestra, whose social standing for holiday cricket was regarded with suspicion by certain visitors from East Ham, began to hit, and got twenty-four off two overs. Then came another small collapse and I had to go in.

I felt nervous, I always do feel nervous. As I go in I am greeted always with smiles of friendship. All on the field exhibit symptoms of intense happiness. Only one man scowls and that is the man batting at the other wicket when I am last man in. Always I determine to show 'em by my deportment and my stance at the wicket that if I am a has-been I am certainly not a never-was.

I face the fast bowler on the worst wicket the world has ever known. Adam and Eve had no mowers or rollers in Eden, but their rock-garden was a billiardstable compared with this bit of turf.

The first ball flies over my head and I at once become excited and confident. Anyone can play that sort of bowling. The second ball somehow gets behind me and strikes me a little sou'-sou'-east of the left-hand back brace-button. "How's that?" screams the bowler. Absurd! Was I not running away from the wicket?

The third ball goes higher still and raises a rainbow-coloured bruise on the lower angle of the scapula. The bowler hasn't the cheek to appeal for that.

I shall never know how I came to be hit as I was by the fourth ball. I lost sight of it coming, put my left hand over my spectacles and played forward with a perfectly straight bat in my right hand. The hit was

made on the external angle of the triceps and we ran two leg-byes, which should have been called arm-byes. Ha, ha !

The bowler now altered his length, pitching them up more. Thus his fifth ball struck me as low as the depression over the great trochanter, and I was able to resume batting in something under a quarter of an hour. He was sorry, said so, and I accepted his apologies gratefully. It was the fault of neither of us. Let us blame the ridiculous pitch.

The sixth ball was a full toss. I shaped to sweep it to the leg boundary, missed somehow, and got a frightful bang on the back of the calf in the region of the gastrocnemius. "How's that?" howled the bowler. "Over," said the umpire. I was unfeignedly glad, because if there had been a no-ball in the over he might have got me with his next in the popliteal space at the back of the knee, a spot where I am extremely tender.

The ass at the other end was bowled by the first ball of the next over, and I had no further chance. As a sportsman I do not complain. I am not so foolish as to think I was set, but I have an idea I was getting to the bottom of that fast stuff. The other bowler was a sort of croquet rabbit, and I could have punished him severely. Of course, I had the distinction of being "not out," and the captain gladly gave me permission to go down to the nearest chemist.

We proceeded to field for the rest of the afternoon. The offensive and good-looking young man, whom all the pretty girls at the hotel made a habit of spoiling, got a century, mostly past me. I fielded at short-leg and point, and wisely made up my mind to 'go for' nothing under waist-high. The offensive young man deliberately turned everything in my direction.

Fearing that the centurion would get a thousand if I continued to field, the captain put me on to bowl. My first ball was hit back at me chest high and at extraordinary speed.

"Catch it," cried our captain. I made a great leap and just got out of the way in time. The captain, a Welsh nobody, was distinctly rude. He demanded to know why I had not attempted to catch. I waited till the ball was returned from the boundary and then I replied.

"Please recollect," said I, "the manner in which I earn my living. If I had attempted to catch that ball I might have broken or split the forefinger of my right hand. Thus I would have been unable to write. If you break your fingers, or even have your entire hand cut off, humanity will be none the worse. Before you criticize my attitude, sir, ask yourself if, in the event of my being incapacitated, you are ready and able to maintain my wife and children."

At the end of the over I went back to short-leg and at once had a most painful experience. The centurion hit the ball hard to leg, and I was so upset by the captain's rudeness that I dived down to it. I did not get to it properly, but diverted its course so that it struck me on the front of the leg, below the knee. It was, vulgarly, a blow on the shin, or, as you would say, the tibia, and I know of none more painful.

I fell down and remained down, rubbing my leg. Some one else fielded the ball and the game went on. When I stood up at last and looked round, a most welcome sight met my eyes. The offensive young man who had scored too many runs was on the ground writhing in agony. A ball had struck him on the inter-tubercular plane and, as far as I could make out, had buried itself in him. Good.

When stumps were drawn I thought the long day had finished wearing on. It had not. There followed at once the Excruciating Torture of the Group Photograph.

I think I have played my last cricket-match.

OF A PIT THAT WAS DIGGED

IAN HAY

A WEEK later we were treated to an all-night sitting. The Irishmen had been quiescent of late, but on this occasion they made amends for their temporary relaxation of patriotism by resolutely obstructing an Appropriation Bill, which had to pass through Committee that night (if John Bull was to have any ready cash at all during the next few months), and kept us replying to amendments and trotting through division-lobbies until six o'clock next morning.

Robin stayed on in attendance at the House most of the night, but about three o'clock I sent him home, with instructions to stay in bed till tea-time if he pleased. He had had a hard time lately.

I was walking homeward in the early sunshine, marvelling, as people who accidentally find themselves up early pharisaically do, at the fatuity of those who waste the best hours of the whole day in bed, and revelling in the near prospect of a bath and my breakfast, when on turning a corner I walked into a hand-cart which was standing across the pavement. It contained workmen's tools—picks, shovels, and the like. On the near side of the roadway a man was erecting one of those curious wigwam arrangements which screen the operations of electricians and other subterranean burrowers from the public gaze. A dirty-faced small boy in corduroys was tending a brazier of live coals, upon which some breakfast cans were steaming. Between the wigwam and the pavement a gigantic navy was hewing wooden paving-blocks out of the roadway.

The spectacle did not attract my interest specially, as this particular piece of street had been eviscerated so often that I had grown callous to its sufferings. But I paused for a moment to survey the big navvy's muscles, and to wonder how early in the morning it would be necessary to rise in order to catch a small boy with a clean face. The navvy was a fine specimen of humanity, with a complexion tanned a dusky coffee colour.

I was reflecting on the joys of the simple life and the futility of politics and other indoor pastimes in general, when the big man rose from his stooping posture and caught my eye. He appeared a little disconcerted by my scrutiny, and turned his back and renewed his exertions with increased vigour, favouring me hereafter with what architects call a "south elevation" of himself.

I went home to breakfast, wondering where I had seen the big navvy's back before. I mentioned casually to Kitty and the Twins that Goring Street was up again. They wondered how the management of the Goring Hotel liked it, with that mess under their very windows, and agreed with me that it was high time Champion's Bill, due for its Third Reading to-morrow, became law.

I stayed in bed till lunch-time, and then, rather later in the afternoon, set out for the House, which I knew I should find in an extremely limp condition after its previous night's dissipation. On the way I called in at the Goring Hotel in Goring Street, where Champion lived when in town. I found him in his room on the first floor, gazing out of the window into the street.

I looked out too, to see what was interesting him. Directly below us lay the encampment of the workmen whom I had seen in the morning. They had hewed up

a few yards of the wood pavement, and the smaller of the two men was now immersed up to his waist in a hole, working rather laboriously in the restricted space at his command with a pick-axe. The boy was piling wooden blocks into a neat heap, and the big man, whose form was only partially visible, was doing something inside the wigwam.

The roadway was more than half blocked, and cabs and omnibuses, in charge of over-heated and eloquent drivers, were being filtered through the narrow space left at their disposal by a phlegmatic policeman.

"Look here," said Champion.

I looked.

"What on *earth* are those fellows doing?" he continued.

"Relaying the road, perhaps."

"One doesn't relay a road by making a deep hole in it."

"Well—gas!"

"Gas and electric light mains in this street are all led along a special conduit reached by manholes every eighty yards," said Champion. "There's no need to dig."

"Well—drains!" said I vaguely. But I was a mere child in the hands of this expert.

"The drains, as you call them," he said testily, "consist of a great sewer away in the depths, accessible from various appointed places. Besides, nobody in his senses tries to lift earth out of a hole with a pick-axe."

"Perhaps the solution of the mystery lies inside the wigwam," I said.

"No. That is just what complicates matters. When a shaft leading down to the electric-light mains is opened, one of those canvas shelters is put over the

top. Now there is *nothing* under that shelter—nothing but the bit of road it covers. The thing seems to be simply a stage accessory, planted there to give the encampment an aspect of reality. Ah, look at that ! ”

“ That ” was a small piece of paving-wood, dexterously hurled by the dirty-faced boy, who seemed to be finding time hang rather heavily on his hands. It took a passing citizen in the small of the back, but when he swung round to detect the source of the missile the boy was on his knees again industriously blowing up the brazier.

With an indignant snort the citizen passed on his way, doubtless adding the outrage, in his mind, to the long list of unsolved London crimes. But retribution awaited the youthful miscreant. The phlegmatic policeman who was regulating the traffic on the single-line system happened to notice the deed. He walked majestically across from the far side of the street towards our excavating friends.

“ Come on ! ” said Champion to me. “ There’s going to be some fun.”

We stepped out through one of the windows, which possessed a broad balcony, and took our stand behind some laurels in tubs which lined the balustrade. The street was comparatively quiet at the time, and we were able to hear most of the dialogue that ensued.

“ ’Ere, mate,” began the traffic-expert to the smaller of the two navvies, “ just ketch that boy of yours a clip on the side of the ’ead, will you ? ”

The smaller man desisted from his labours in the hole.

“ Wotsye, ole sport ? ” he inquired cheerily.

The policeman was a little ruffled by this familiarity.

“ I’ll trouble *you*,” he repeated with some *hauteur*, “ to ketch that boy of yours a clip on the side of the ’ead. If not, I shall ’ave to do my duty, according——”

Here the roar of a passing dray drowned his utterance.

The smaller man clambered nimbly out of the hole and proceeded to grab his young friend by the scruff of the neck.

"Billy," he remarked dispassionately, "this gentleman says as 'ow I'm to give you a clip on the side of the 'ead."

"Woffor," inquired Billy, simulating extreme terror.

The man passed the question on to the policeman, who explained the nature of the offence. His statement was voluntarily corroborated by several members of an audience which seemed to have materialized from nowhere, and now formed a ring round the encampment.

"Righto!" said the man, with cheery acquiescence. "Billy, my lad, you've got to 'ave it."

"Tha's right, ole son! You give 'im socks," remarked a hoarse and rather indistinct voice of the gin-and-fog variety, from among the spectators.

Simultaneously its owner lurched his way to the front rank, the others making room for him with that respectful sympathy, not unmixed with envy, which is always accorded to a true-born Briton in his condition. He was obviously a member of some profession connected with coaldust, and it was plain that he had been celebrating the conclusion of his day's labours.

The smaller navvy, thus exhorted, administered the desired clip. It was not a particularly severe one, but it drew from its recipient the somewhat unexpected expostulation:

"You silly ass! Not so hard!"

Where had I heard that stentorian but childish voice before? Who was this road-breaker's acolyte, with his brazier, his dirty face, and—a public-school accent?

I leaned over the balustrade and surveyed him and his two companions. Then I drew my breath sharply.

Merciful heavens !

The dirty-faced boy was my brother-in-law, Master Gerald Rubislaw, the clip-administerer was Dicky Lever, and the gigantic and taciturn navvy was—my secretary !

Having witnessed the carrying out of the sentence, the policeman returned to his duties—none too soon ; for a furniture van and a butcher's cart, locked in an inextricable embrace, the subject of a sulphurous duet between their respective proprietors, called loudly for his attention.

Meanwhile Coaldust, who had been inspecting the result of our friends' united labours with some interest, suddenly echoed the question which had first exercised Champion's logical mind by inquiring what the blank dash the two adjectival criminals and the qualified nipper thought they were doing to the asterisked road.

He received no encouragement. Robin was now engaged with a hammer and chisel in cutting a sort of touch-line all round the encampment, while Dicky did not cease manfully to delve with the pick-axe in the pit which he had digged for himself. For a long time they turned a deaf ear to the anxious inquiries of their interlocutor.

But there are limits to long-suffering. Coaldust's witticisms increased with his audience, and at last Dicky turned to Robin and cried, with a really admirable maintenance of character and accent :

" 'Ere, Scotty, come and give this bloke one in the neck. 'E's askin' for it ! "

Robin deliberately suspended operations, rose heavily

to his feet, and cleared his throat. Then he turned upon the alcoholic Coaldust. I strained my ears. Surely *he* was not going to talk Cockney!

Far from it. He stuck to his last.

"See here, ma man," he roared, in a voice that made the crowd jump, "are ye for a ding on the side o' the heid?"

Coaldust capitulated with alacrity.

"No offence, 'Orace!" he remarked genially. "You an' me was always pals. Put it there!" He extended an ebony hand, which Robin solemnly shook and returned to his work.

Whatever my three friends were up to, it is possible that they might now have been left in peace for some time; for the crowd, seeing no chance of further sport from Coaldust, began to melt away. But a fresh character entered the scene to keep alive the flagging interest of the drama.

My first intimation that something new was afoot came from an errand-boy on the edge of the crowd, who, addressing a lady or ladies unseen, suddenly expressed a desire to be chased.

All heads were now turned down the street, and there, approaching with rather faltering steps, carrying a red cotton bundle and a tea-can, I beheld—one of my sisters-in-law!

Postulating Dicky, I presumed it was Dilly, and I began to piece together in my mind the plot of this elaborate comedy. Evidently Dicky, Robin, and Gerald had decided—for a bet, or because they were dared, or possibly with a view to giving Champion's Bill a leg-up by a practical demonstration of the crying need for it—to dress themselves up as workmen and come and "do a turn," as they say in the music-halls, to the discomfort of his Majesty's lieges and the congestion

of traffic, upon some sufficiently busy thoroughfare for a stated period of time.

Certainly they were doing it rather well. They were admirably made up—Dicky was a past-master at that sort of thing—and their operations so far had been sufficiently like the genuine article to impose upon the public in general—if we except Champion and Coaldust—even to the point of securing the assistance of the traffic-directing policeman.

But alas! with that one step further, which is so often fatal to great enterprises, they had sought to add a finishing touch of realism to their impersonation by the inclusion of a little feminine interest; and to that end Dilly had been added to the cast—or more likely had added herself—in the *rôle* of a young person of humble station bringing her affianced his tea.

And, not for the first time in the history of man, it was the woman who opened the door to disaster.

Dilly wore a natty print dress—probably my housemaid's—with a tartan shawl over her head. She had on her thickest shoes, but they were woefully smart and thin for a girl of her class. Moreover, her hair was beautifully arranged under the shawl, and her hands—though she had had the sense to discard her ruby and sapphire engagement-ring—were too white and her face was too clean to lend conviction to her impersonation. In short, in her desire to present a pleasing *tout ensemble*—an object in which I must say she had succeeded to perfection—Dilly had utterly neglected detail and histrionic accuracy.

Evidently she was not expecting a gallery. Two highly interested concentric circles—one of people and one of dogs—round her *fiancé's* encampment was rather more than she had bargained for. She had emerged quite suddenly from a side-street (which I knew led to

a short cut from home) and now paused irresolutely a few yards away, crimson to the roots of her hair, what time the errand-boy, with looks of undisguised admiration, continued to reiterate his desire to be pursued.

The crowd all turned and stared at poor Dilly. Obviously they did not know what to make of her. Possibly she was some one from the chorus of a musical comedy going to be photographed, possibly she was merely "a bit balmy," or possibly she was an advertisement for something, and would begin to distribute handbills presently. So far, she merely looked as if she wanted to cry.

It was Robin who saw her first. He immediately stepped over his newly completed touch-line, and taking the spotted bundle and the tea-can from her hands, conducted her ceremoniously within the magic circle, saying, in a voice much more like his own than before :

"Come away, lassie !"

Dicky looked up from his labours at this, and beheld his *fiancée* for the first time. All he said was :

"By gad, you've done it after all ! Bravo !"

But Dilly did not appear to be at all gratified. She merely sat on Gerald's little mountain of paving-blocks, looking as if she could not decide whether to throw her apron over her face and scream, or take a header into the wigwam. My heart bled for her in spite of her folly. The crowd, deeply interested and breathing hard, stood round waiting for the performance to begin.

It was Coaldust who took the lead.

"Tip us a song and dance, Clara," he said encouragingly.

Robin, who had been making a show of unfastening the bundle, suddenly rose to his feet. Coaldust saw him.

"All right, Carnegie," he remarked hurriedly. "No offence, ole pal !"

But Robin turned to Dicky, and the two held a hasty conversation, whose nature I could guess. Dilly could not be exposed to this sort of thing any longer. They began to put on their coats.

"They are going to give it up," I said, not without relief. "About time, isn't it? Do you recognize them, Champion?"

But Champion, I found, was gone—probably to establish an *alibi*. Perhaps he was right. Questions might be asked in the House about this.

When I turned again to the scene below I found that the crowd had thickened considerably, and that the policeman had once more left the traffic to congest itself, and joined in the game.

"You must tell that young woman to move on," he said to Dicky, not unkindly. "She's causin' a crowd to collect, and that's a thing she can be give in charge for."

"All right," said Dicky hurriedly; "we're all going."

The policeman, struck by this sudden anxiety to oblige, became suspicious.

"All of you?" he said. "'Ow about this mess in the road?"

Robin came to the rescue.

"We'll be back presently and sort it," he said reassuringly.

"Of course," said Dicky, pulling himself together. "Back in 'arf a tick, governor!"

"Don't you go callin' me names," said the policeman, as the spectators indulged in happy laughter.

"Sorry!—I mean, certainly!" said Dicky, getting flustered. (I could see Robin glowering at him.) "We are just going down the street a minute. This—er—girl has brought us a bit of bad news. There's been an accident happened—er——"

"To her puir old mither," put in Robin, whom I began to suspect of rather enjoying this entertainment for its own sake.

This heartrending piece of intelligence touched the crowd, and Coaldust was instantly forward in proposing an informal vote of condolence, which was seconded by a bare-armed lady in a deer-stalker cap. But the policeman, evidently roused by our friends' ill-judged and precipitate attempt to strike camp, suddenly produced a pocket-book from his tunic, and said :

"It is my duty to take your names and addresses, together with the name of the firm employing you."

This announcement obviously disconcerted Dicky and Robin ; for it is one thing to take part in a masquerade, and another to get out of the consequences thereof by cold-drawn lying.

However, the policeman was sucking his pencil and waiting, so Dicky said :

"You can get all the information you want from the Borough Surveyor."

It was a bold effort, but the policeman merely said :

"Your name, please !"

Dicky, fairly cornered, replied :

"Er—Samuel"—I thought at first he was going to say "Inglethwaite," and was prepared to drop a flower-pot on his head if he did ; but he continued, with the air of one offering a real bargain at the price—"Phillipps."

"Two p's ?" inquired the constable.

"Three," said Dicky.

The policeman rolled a threatening eye upon him.

"Be careful !" he said, in an awful voice.

"One of them comes at the beginning," said Dicky meekly.

"Haw, haw !" roared several people in the crowd,

which was unfortunate for Dicky. He was one of those people who would risk a kingdom to raise a laugh.

"Address?" continued the policeman.

"Buck'nam Pallis!" shouted Coaldust, before anyone else in the crowd could say it.

The policeman turned and directed upon him a look that would have entirely obfuscated a soberer man.

"I'll attend to you presently," he said, in the exact tones which my dentist employs when he shuts me into the waiting-room. "Now, then, your address? Come along!"

Dicky gave some address which I did not catch, and the representative of the law turned to Robin. The latter evidently saw rocks ahead if the inquisition was to be extended to the whole party. He said:

"Surely there is no need to take any more names."

"I'll be responsible for the lot," added Dicky eagerly—too eagerly. "Now let's be off! Come along Dilly—Liza!"

He took Dilly by the arm, and, preceded by Gerald, began to press through the crowd, which by this time extended almost right across the street.

But the now thoroughly aroused guardian of the peace, determined not to be rushed like this, broke away from Robin, who was engaging him in pleasant conversation, and, hastening after the retreating group, laid a detaining and imperious hand on Dilly's arm.

What happened next I was not quick enough to see. But there was a swirl and a heave in the crowd, and presently Dicky became visible, standing in a very heroic attitude with his arm round Dilly; while the policeman, with an awe-inspiring deliberateness which implied "Now you *have* gone and done it!" extricated himself majestically but painfully from the chasm in

the road which had recently been occupying Dicky's attention, and into which Dicky in defence of his beloved had apparently pushed him.

Picking up his pocket-book and putting it back into his chest, and uttering the single and awful word "*Assault!*" the policeman produced a whistle and blew it.

Things were certainly getting serious, and I had just decided to send out the hotel porter to the policeman to tell him to bring his captives inside out of the way of the crowd, when I noticed that Robin was ploughing his way towards the outskirts of the throng, waving his arm as he went. Then I saw that his objective was another policeman—an inspector this time. He was a gigantic creature, and Robin and he, slowly forging towards each other through the surrounding sea of faces, looked like two liners in a tideway.

Robin's conduct in deliberately attracting the notice of yet another representative of law and order appeared eccentric on the face of it, but his subsequent behaviour was more peculiar still.

He seized the newly arrived giant by the arm and drew him apart from the crowd, where he told him something which appeared to amuse them both considerably.

"Yewmorous dialogue," announced Coaldust to his neighbours, "between Cleopartre's Needle and the Monument!"

But it was more than that—it was deep calling to deep. Presently the explanation, or the joke, or whatever it was, came to an end, and the inspector advanced threateningly upon the crowd.

"Pass along, there, pass along!" he cried, with a devastating sweep of his arm. He spoke with a Highland accent, and I realized yet once more the ubiquity

of that great Mutual Benefit Society which has its headquarters north of the Tweed.

The crowd politely receded about six inches, and through them, accompanied by Robin, the inspector clove his way to the encampment, where Dicky, who seemed to be rapidly losing his head, was delivering a sort of recitative to every one in general, accompanied by the policeman on the whistle.

What the inspector said to his subordinate I do not know, but the net result was that in a very short time the former was escorting the entire party of excavators down the street, attended by a retinue of small boys (who were evidently determined to see if it was going to turn out a hanging matter); while the latter, to whom the clearing of the 'house' had evidently been deputed, set about that task with a vigour and ferocity which plainly indicated a well-meaning and zealous mind tingling under an entirely undeserved official snub.

They told me all about it in the smoking-room that night.

"The idea," began Dicky, "was——"

"Whose idea was it?" I inquired sternly.

"It was all of our idea," replied my future relative by marriage lucidly.

"But who worked it out?" I asked—"the plot, the business, the 'props'? It was a most elaborate production."

"Never you mind that, old man," said Dicky lightly. (But I saw that Robin was laboriously relighting his pipe and surrounding himself with an impenetrable cloud of smoke.) "Listen to the yarn. The idea was to stake out a claim in some fairly busy road and stay there for a given time—say, six o'clock till tea-time—and kid the passing citizens that we were duly authorized to get in the way and mess up the traffic generally.

If we succeeded we were going to write to the *Times* or some such paper and tell what we had done—
anonymously, of course—just to show how necessary
Champion's Bill is."

"Have you written the letter?"

"Yes."

"I wouldn't send it if I were you."

"Well, that's what Robin here has been saying."

"Putrid rot if we don't!" remarked Gerald, who
had by this time washed his face, but ought to have
been in bed for all that.

"We can't do it," said Robin. "For one thing, we
have attracted quite enough public attention already
—it's bound to be in the papers anyhow, now, and that
will probably give the Bill all the advertisement it needs
—and if we give the authorities any more clues our
names may come out. For another thing, it wouldn't
be fair to Hector MacPherson."

"Who is he?"

"That inspector who came up at the critical moment.
He was one of my first friends in London."

"I remember. Go on."

"I was thankful to see him, I can tell you. Well,
he undertook to square that poor bewildered bobby,
and to take steps to get the road cleared and the hole
filled up."

"How?"

"There is a street being mended just round the
corner, and he said he would get the foreman of the
gang, who is a relation of his wife's, to send a couple
of men to put things right immediately. It's probably
done by now."

"Then I suppose we may regard the incident as
closed."

"Yes, I suppose so."

There was a silence.

"It was a bit of a failure at the finish," said Dicky meditatively, "but it was a success on the whole—what?"

"Rather!" said his fellow-conspirators.

"Our chief difficulty," continued Dicky, "was to decide on the exact type of drama to present. I was all for our dressing up as foreigners, and relaying an asphalt street. It would have been top-hole to trot about in list slippers and pat the hot asphalt down with those things they use. And think of the make-up!—curly moustaches and earrings! And we could have jabbered spoof Italian. But then old Robin here, who I must say has a headpiece on him, pointed out that the scenery and props would be much too expensive. We should want a cart with a bonfire in it and a sort of witches' cauldron on top, and all kinds of sticky stuff; so we gave up that scheme. We did not feel inclined to mess with gas-pipes or electric wires either, in case we burst ourselves up; so we finally decided to select some street with a wooden pavement, and maul it about generally for as long as we could. If we got interfered with by anybody official, we meant to talk some rot about the Borough Surveyor, and skedaddle if necessary. But it all worked beautifully!"

"Where did you get your tools and tent?"

"Robin managed that," said Dicky admiringly.

Robin looked extremely dour, and I refrained from further inquiry.

"Robin's got some rum pals, I *don't* think!" observed Gerald pertinently.

"Didn't I make these chaps up well?" continued Dicky enthusiastically. "We roared when you passed us at breakfast-time without spotting us."

"Very creditable impersonation," I replied, getting

up and knocking my pipe out. "I only hope I shan't have to resign my seat over it. If I may venture to offer a criticism, the weak spot in the enterprise was the idea of inviting your lady friends to come and take tea with you."

"Just what I said all along, my boy," remarked the experienced Gerald, wagging his head sagely. "That was what mucked up the show. Wherever there's a petticoat there's trouble. Oh, I *warned* them!"

On my way up to bed I flushed Dilly from a window-seat on the staircase, where she had evidently been lingering on the off-chance of a supplementary good-night from Dicky.

"Well?" I said severely.

"Well?"

"Do you know what time it is?"

"I expect your wife will tell you that when you get upstairs," said Dilly.

I tried a fresh line.

"After the labours of to-day I should have thought you would have been glad to go to bed," I said. "You imp!" And I laughed. There is something very disarming about the Twins' misdemeanours.

We turned and walked upstairs together, and paused outside Dilly's door.

"Good night, Dilly," I said; "I admired your pluck."

"It wasn't me," said Dilly, in a very small voice.

"Not you?"

"N-no. I said I would come, because Dicky said I daren't, and at the last moment I funk'd it. (Adrian, I simply couldn't!) So Dolly went instead."

"Then that was Dolly all the time?"

"Yes."

"And she went, just to—to——"

"To save my face. She's a brick," said Dilly.

This, by the way, was the first occasion on which I realized the truth of Robin's dictum that Dilly and Dolly were girls of widely different character.

"And didn't the others recognize her?"

"No. That's the best of it!"

"Not Dicky?"

"No."

"Not even Robin? He is pretty hard to deceive, you know."

"No, not even Robin. *None* of them know. Good night!"

But she was wrong.

From "The Right Stuff"

ABOUT WIRELESS

JOHN HENRY

I ALWAYS remember the first time I went in for wireless, and when I think about all the people who have wireless sets, I can't help wondering whether their first dabblings in this science, or hobby, or infliction, caused them as much bother as I landed into when I started.

Now I didn't want to go in for wireless. My life was happy enough without wireless. Wireless was wished on me. I kept hens and a dog and was married, and my hair was getting thin, but otherwise I had no real trouble.

It's a long time ago now, but I remember it all distinctly. I'd just done the washing up and taken 'Erbert out for his walk. I'd tidied up the grate, and I was talking about the hens. I had a dozen eggs under the old brown hen that I expected to hatch out any day. I was telling Blossom about this, and she asked how long it took to hatch chickens, and I told her three weeks; and then she asked how long it took to hatch ducks, and I said four weeks.

Then she said she supposed if we wanted ducks we'd have to let the hen sit a week longer, and I was just getting my breath back when she said: "What about a wireless set? We could put it on that little table and have the earth in the sink."

Well, of course, I thought she was talking about hens, and I told her we couldn't set a hen on a table, because she'd push the eggs off, and eggs don't bounce, and if

we put earth in the sink and the hen scratched it, she'd make a mess all over the kitchen floor.

Then Blossom was rude to me, and cast aspersions, and said she wanted a wireless set so that she could listen ; and I said I'd get her one, because it would be a nice change for me, but I didn't let her hear me say that last bit.

She said : " I've been reading in the paper all about wireless, and it's very simple. All you have to do is to get some wires and fix your aerial on the roof and fasten it to your set and put the earpieces on and listen, and you can hear Birmingham and New York and jazz bands and music, and you have uncles, and you get a licence, and it's lovely."

That sounded attractive enough, so I said : " What sort of a set do you want ? " She said : " Here's a picture of a nice one. It's got four electric lights and knobs on, and there must be a gramophone given with it, because there's the trumpet. It doesn't say the price, but you'd better take about fifteen shillings with you, and take Venus and 'Erbert, because 'Erbert needs another run, and Venus can help you to carry the wire."

Venus is our maid. She's not a good maid. I often wonder who'll be the worst maid in the world when Venus dies. Venus doesn't treat me with the respect I feel I deserve. She usually addresses me as " Hey ! " and in conversation with others refers to me as " 'im," accompanied by a jerk of the thumb in my direction. A stranger might be forgiven if he mistook Venus for the assistant of a very busy sweep. She is fourteen years old, and can twitch one ear, and she's very rude to errand boys.

I said : " Oh, I can manage to carry everything myself." But it was no use, so Venus came with me. I got to the wireless shop all right. I didn't take Venus

in with me. I left her outside, and told her to look after 'Erbert.

The wireless man was not polite. I explained the kind of set I wanted, but it seems Blossom had underestimated the price. I cherish the conviction that the wireless man is not a good man. I am convinced that in his youth he rang door-bells and ran away. It is my firm belief that if he had an aged aunt he would saturate her with paraffin and set her on fire.

These impressions I gathered from the remarks that followed me out of his establishment after I had mentioned the price I proposed paying for the wireless set. When I gained the street I missed Venus and 'Erbert, and a dismal foreboding of impending disaster crept over me. I hurried along, and as I turned the corner my worst fears were realized.

In the middle of a crowd of interested spectators I saw Venus and 'Erbert. They appeared to be in trouble. 'Erbert was endeavouring to disentangle himself from the ruins of a perambulator, what time an infuriated woman with a weeping infant in her arms was belabouring him with an umbrella.

Venus was reclining in the gutter surrounded by a miscellaneous assortment of fruit and vegetables, and with a viscous fluid dripping slowly from her hair. A diminutive youth, making use of expressions highly unsuited to his tender years, was crawling from the wreckage towards an overturned barrow.

It appears that there had been a cat. Now I like cats. I love little pussy, her coat is so warm, and all that sort of thing. But 'Erbert doesn't. And this cat, it seems, according to 'Erbert, needed exercise.

I have no objection to 'Erbert running races with cats. No objection at all. But on this occasion he forgot Venus. When I had entered the wireless shop

Venus, it seems, entered into a spirited exchange of repartee with the greengrocer's boy, and didn't notice that 'Erbert's lead had got twisted round her ankle, so when the cat-hunt started 'Erbert upset Venus and dragged her after him, and between them they overturned the greengrocer's barrow.

Unfortunately, that was the moment chosen by the lady of the perambulator to emerge from the grocer's shop, bearing a jug of treacle. The barrow pushed over the perambulator, and the lady, in a vain attempt to avert the catastrophe, poured the treacle over the head of the unfortunate Venus.

It was at this moment that I arrived. I regretted it immediately and turned unostentatiously to depart, but too late. 'Erbert saw me, and with a last despairing effort freed himself from the embrace of the perambulator and greeted me enthusiastically, only pausing long enough to take a playful bite at the angry woman. She, after a frantic effort to maintain her equilibrium, collapsed on to the tomatoes, and added the final touch to the scene of ruin and desolation.

The next few minutes were crowded and unhappy ones for me, and I longed for the comparative friendliness of the wireless man. But with the expenditure of the fifteen shillings, I managed to pacify the victims, and at last got home. When I confessed to Blossom what had happened she got mad and was very rough, and broke two cups and a plate on me, but I've told her I shall be cross if she isn't more careful. She's not going to bully me.

Thus my first attempt to acquire a wireless set ended in disaster, and I can only ascribe it to the rash attempt of a woman to tamper with the vital forces of Nature and try to do that for which she is temperamentally and fundamentally unfitted—to listen.

However, we did get a set eventually, and we got it fixed, but it wasn't an easy job. Joe Murgatroyd helped me to fix it. Joe's a bit of a musician, so of course he was just the chap to help with wireless.

Many years ago Joe used to play in a band at a place called Liversedge. That's in Yorkshire. This band used to practise in the upstairs room of a little hotel, and Joe says that one night one of the bandsmen was late for practice, and he stopped in the road to listen to the music a bit, and then, Joe says, this chap went upstairs, and said, "By gum, but the band does sound champion from outside," and they all put their trumpets down, and went outside to listen.

I don't know whether to believe this or not.

It was Blossom who bought the set at the finish. After the bother I got into when she sent me to buy it, I kept pretty quiet for a few days, and Blossom didn't say much either. By that—I don't mean that she didn't talk much. I mean, she didn't say much about wireless, but I noticed she looked at the programme in the *Radio Times* every morning, and kept saying that she liked jazz better than that highbrow stuff.

Blossom hasn't got classical tastes. It's a pity, but she hasn't. I've tried to improve and educate her, and I've bought her some good songs like *Why did you teach me to love you?* and *I love her, yes, I love her*, but she goes round singing some nonsense about "her sweetie went away."

Well, one morning Blossom went out, and she was gone rather a long time, and I was beginning to wonder what was the matter when she came back. She looked flushed and hot, but she had a triumphant air and a parcel and some wire.

There were several kinds of wire, and there seemed rather a lot of it, and it was festooned all round her,

and it was dangling in coils and trailing behind her, and it kept tripping her up, and 'Erbert saw it, and he barked and went to play with it, and he got tangled in it too, and then Blossom fell over him and she couldn't get up.

After I'd got her unravelled I looked at the wire and I said: "Are you sure you've got enough?" This was a subtle remark, but Blossom said: "Yes, I think so. The man said I'd better get plenty, and here's a paper with the instructions how to fix it, and it's very simple, the man said."

Well, I had a look at the instructions, and then I went to ask Joe Murgatroyd to give me a hand.

Joe came round, and he had a look at the set. He didn't seem to think much of it. He picked it up and shook it.

"While," he said, "this instrument represents an interesting type, finely made and high-class in every way, you've got too much wire, and I don't think it will work," he said. "The aerial is the first thing to fix," he said. "Where do you keep your roof?"

So I showed him, and we went up there, and we decided we'd fix the aerial between two chimneys. Joe said: "You go down and bring the wire and the hammer and the pliers and the insulators and two broom-handles and some string." So I went down, and I couldn't find any broom-handles, but I found two poles that Blossom had bought for fixing the curtains on, and Joe said those would do.

We fastened one end of the aerial on to our chimney, and then we fixed the other end to another chimney, and we began to tighten it, but the builders must have been careless, because our chimney came off, so we fixed the wire round the chimney-stack, and we made a very good job of it. It began to rain then, so we

came down, and we found the house full of smoke, and Blossom was upset and said the coal was a disgrace, nothing but dirt, and the chimney was full of soot, "and isn't it a shame! and what ought we to do, Mr Murgatroyd?"

Joe told her she ought to let some burning newspapers go up the chimney. That would remove the soot and create a draught, and a bright, cheerful fire would result, he said, and she tried it, and it smoked worse than ever, and then Joe said it would soon be all right, and he began to cough and went home then.

I didn't tell Blossom about the chimney-pot. It would only have caused trouble, and something seemed to tell me not to say anything about it. I didn't tell her about those curtain-poles either.

By this time it was too late to do any listening, so we left the set as it was till morning, and we went to bed, and as I was tired I soon dropped off to sleep, and I was dreaming that I had a wireless set made out of a chimney-pot, and that it had a soiled face like Venus, our maid, when I was wakened up by Blossom.

She said: "John Henry." I said: "What?" She said: "Listen! there's burglars!" I said: "Good. They'll get tangled in the wire. They can't escape." She said: "It must be a gang. There's hundreds of them. Listen at the noise!" I said: "Wait till morning and I'll fetch Joe Murgatroyd. He'll fix 'em." "Get up," she said. "Get up!"

Well, I was annoyed at being wakened up like that, and I told her she ought to get up herself and sing *My Sweetie went away* to them, and she got very rough, and as I was out of bed by that time I listened and it was pouring with rain, and I could hear a voice on the roof, and I told Blossom, and she said, "It's Venus," and it was, and I had to climb up to the roof

and let her in, and I got wet and was grieved, and I told Venus she was engaged to help with the housework and not to do film stunts on roofs, and then she told Blossom about the chimney-pot, and I caught it.

Still the wireless set worked beautifully the next day. I don't think it would have done, but I got the man from the shop to come in and fix it.

From " Still Calling "

THE MAKING OF A NEW YORKER

O. HENRY

BESIDES many other things, Raggles was a poet. He was called a tramp; but that was only an elliptical way of saying that he was a philosopher, an artist, a traveller, a naturalist, and a discoverer. But most of all he was a poet. In all his life he never wrote a line of verse; he lived his poetry. His *Odyssey* would have been a Limerick, had it been written. But, to linger with the primary proposition, Raggles was a poet.

Raggles's speciality, had he been driven to ink and paper, would have been sonnets to the cities. He studied cities as women study their reflections in mirrors; as children study the glue and sawdust of a dislocated doll; as the men who write about wild animals study the cages in the Zoo. A city to Raggles was not merely a pile of bricks and mortar, peopled by a certain number of inhabitants; it was a thing with a soul characteristic and distinct; an individual conglomeration of life, with its own peculiar essence, flavour, and feeling. Two thousand miles to the north and south, east and west, Raggles wandered in poetic fervour, taking the cities to his breast. He footed it on dusty roads, or sped magnificently in freight cars, counting time as of no account. And when he had found the heart of a city and listened to its secret confession he strayed on, restless, to another. Fickle Raggles!—but perhaps he had not met the civic corporation that could engage and hold his critical fancy.

Through the ancient poets we have learned that the cities are feminine. So they were to poet Raggles ; and his mind carried a concrete and clear conception of the figure that symbolized and typified each one that he had wooed.

Chicago seemed to swoop down upon him with a breezy suggestion of Mrs Partington, plumes and patchouli, and to disturb his rest with a soaring and beautiful song of future promise. But Raggles would awake to a sense of shivering cold and a haunting impression of ideals lost in a depressing aura of potato salad and fish.

Thus Chicago affected him. Perhaps there is a vagueness and inaccuracy in the description ; but that is Raggles's fault. He should have recorded his sensations in magazine poems.

Pittsburg impressed him as the play of *Othello* performed in the Russian language in a railroad-station by Dockstader's minstrels. A royal and generous lady, this Pittsburg, though—homely, hearty, with flushed face, washing the dishes in a silk dress and white kid slippers, and bidding Raggles sit before the roaring fireplace and drink champagne with his pigs' feet and fried potatoes.

New Orleans had simply gazed down upon him from a balcony. He could see her pensive, starry eyes and catch the flutter of her fan, and that was all. Only once he came face to face with her. It was at dawn, when she was flushing the red bricks of the *banquette* with a pail of water. She laughed and hummed a *chansonnette* and filled Raggles's shoes with ice-cold water. *Allons !*

Boston construed herself to the poetic Raggles in an erratic and singular way. It seemed to him that he had drunk cold tea and that the city was a white, cold cloth that had been bound tightly around his brow to

spur him to some unknown but tremendous mental effort. And, after all, he came to shovel snow for a livelihood; and the cloth, becoming wet, tightened its knots and could not be removed.

Indefinite and unintelligible ideas, you will say; but your disapprobation should be tempered with gratitude, for these are poets' fancies—and suppose you had come upon them in verse!

One day Raggles came and laid siege to the heart of the great city of Manhattan. She was the greatest of all; and he wanted to learn her note in the scale; to taste and appraise and classify and solve and label her, and arrange her with the other cities that had given him up the secret of their individuality. And here we cease to be Raggles's translator and become his chronicler.

Raggles landed from a ferry-boat one morning and walked into the core of the town with the *blasé* air of a cosmopolite. He was dressed with care to play the rôle of an "unidentified man." No country, race, class, *clique*, union, party, clan, or bowling association could have claimed him. His clothing, which had been donated to him piecemeal by citizens of different height, but same number of inches around the heart, was not yet as uncomfortable to his figure as those specimens of raiment, self-measured, that are railroaded to you by transcontinental tailors with a suitcase, suspenders, silk handkerchief, and pearl studs as a bonus. Without money—as a poet should be—but with the ardour of an astronomer discovering a new star in the chorus of the Milky Way, or a man who has seen ink suddenly flow from his fountain-pen, Raggles wandered into the great city.

Late in the afternoon he drew out of the roar and commotion with a look of dumb terror on his counten-

ance. He was defeated, puzzled, discomfited, frightened. Other cities had been to him as long primer to read ; as country maidens quickly to fathom ; as send-price-of-subscription-with-answer rebuses to solve ; as oyster cocktails to swallow ; but here was one as cold, glittering, serene, impossible as a four-carat diamond in a window to a lover outside fingering damply in his pocket his ribbon-counter salary.

The greetings of the other cities he had known—their homespun kindness, their human gamut of rough charity, friendly curses, garrulous curiosity, and easily estimated credulity or indifference. This city of Manhattan gave him no clue ; it was walled against him. Like a river of adamant it flowed past him in the streets. Never an eye was turned upon him ; no voice spoke to him. His heart yearned for the clap of Pittsburg's sooty hand on his shoulder ; for Chicago's menacing but social yawp in his ear ; for the pale and eleemosynary stare through the Bostonian eyeglass—even for the precipitate but unmalicious boot-toe of Louisville or St Louis.

On Broadway Raggles, successful suitor of many cities, stood, bashful, like any country swain. For the first time he experienced the poignant humiliation of being ignored. And when he tried to reduce this brilliant, swiftly changing, ice-cold city to a formula he failed utterly. Poet though he was, it offered him no colour similes, no points of comparison, no flaw in its polished facets, no handle by which he could hold it up and view its shape and structure, as he familiarly and often contemptuously had done with other towns. The houses were interminable ramparts loopholed for defence ; the people were bright but bloodless spectres passing in sinister and selfish array.

The thing that weighed heaviest on Raggles's soul

and clogged his poet's fancy was the spirit of absolute egotism that seemed to saturate the people as toys are saturated with paint. Each one that he considered appeared a monster of abominable and insolent conceit. Humanity was gone from them; they were toddling idols of stone and varnish, worshipping themselves and greedy for, though oblivious of, worship from their fellow graven images. Frozen, cruel, implacable, impervious, cut to an identical pattern, they hurried on their ways like statues brought by some miracles to motion, while soul and feeling lay unaroused in the reluctant marble.

Gradually Raggles became conscious of certain types. One was an elderly gentleman with a snow-white short beard, pink, unwrinkled face, and stony, sharp blue eyes, attired in the fashion of a gilded youth, who seemed to personify the city's wealth, ripeness, and frigid unconcern. Another type was a woman, tall, beautiful, clear as a steel engraving, goddess-like, calm, clothed like the princesses of old, with eyes as coldly blue as the reflection of sunlight on a glacier. And another was a by-product of this town of marionettes—a broad, swaggering, grim, threateningly sedate fellow, with a jowl as large as a harvested wheatfield, the complexion of a baptized infant, and the knuckles of a prize-fighter. This type leaned against cigar signs and viewed the world with frappéed contumely.

A poet is a sensitive creature, and Raggles soon shrivelled in the bleak embrace of the undecipherable. The chill, sphinx-like, ironical, illegible, unnatural, ruthless expression of the city left him downcast and bewildered. Had it no heart? Better the woodpile, the scolding of vinegar-faced housewives at back doors, the kindly spleen of bartenders behind provincial free-lunch counters, the amiable truculence of rural constables, the kicks, arrests, and happy-go-lucky chances

of the other vulgar, loud, crude cities than this freezing heartlessness.

Raggles summoned his courage and sought alms from the populace. Unheeding, regardless, they passed on without the wink of an eyelash to testify that they were conscious of his existence. And then he said to himself that this fair but pitiless city of Manhattan was without a soul; that its inhabitants were *mannequins* moved by wires and springs, and that he was alone in a great wilderness.

Raggles started to cross the street. There was a blast, a roar, a hissing, and a crash as something struck him and hurled him over and over six yards from where he had been. As he was coming down like the stick of a rocket the earth and all the cities thereof turned to a fractured dream.

Raggles opened his eyes. First an odour made itself known to him—an odour of the earliest spring flowers of Paradise. And then a hand soft as a falling petal touched his brow. Bending over him was the woman clothed like the princesses of old, with blue eyes, now soft and humid with human sympathy. Under his head on the pavement were silks and furs. With Raggles's hat in his hand, and with his face pinker than ever from a vehement burst of oratory against reckless driving, stood the elderly gentleman who personified the city's wealth and ripeness. From a near-by *café* hurried the by-product with the vast jowl and baby complexion, bearing a glass full of a crimson fluid that suggested delightful possibilities.

"Drink dis, sport," said the by-product, holding the glass to Raggles's lips.

Hundreds of people huddled around in a moment, their faces wearing the deepest concern. Two flattering and gorgeous policemen got into the circle and pressed

back the overplus of Samaritans. An old lady in a black shawl spoke loudly of camphor; a newsboy slipped one of his papers beneath Raggles's elbow, where it lay on the muddy pavement. A brisk young man with a notebook was asking for names.

A bell clanged importantly, and the ambulance cleaned a lane through the crowd. A cool surgeon slipped into the midst of affairs.

"How do you feel, old man?" asked the surgeon, stooping easily to his task.

The princess of silks and satins wiped a red drop or two from Raggles's brow with a fragrant cobweb.

"Me?" said Raggles, with a seraphic smile. "I feel fine."

He had found the heart of his new city.

In three days they let him leave his cot for the convalescent ward in the hospital. He had been in there an hour when the attendants heard sounds of conflict. Upon investigation they found that Raggles had assaulted and damaged a brother convalescent—a glowering transient whom a freight-train collision had sent in to be patched up.

"What's all this about?" inquired the head nurse.

"He was runnin' down me town," said Raggles.

"What town?" asked the nurse.

"Noo York," said Raggles.

From "The Trimmed Lamp"

ON WITH THE DANCE

A. P. HERBERT

I HAVE been to a dance ; or rather I have been to a fashionable restaurant where dancing is done. I was not invited to a dance—there are very good reasons for that ; I was invited to dinner. But many of my fellow-guests have invested a lot of money in dancing. That is to say, they keep on paying dancing-instructors to teach them new tricks ; and the dancing-instructors, who know their business, keep on inventing new tricks. As soon as they have taught everybody a new step they say it is unfashionable and invent a new one. This is all very well, but it means that, in order to keep up with them and get your money's worth out of the last trick you learned, it is necessary during its brief life of respectability to dance at every available opportunity. You dance as many nights a week as is physically possible ; you dance on weekdays and you dance on Sundays ; you begin dancing in the afternoon and you dance during tea in the coffee-rooms of expensive restaurants, whirling your precarious way through littered and abandoned tea-tables ; and at dinner-time you leap up madly before the fish and dance like variety artistes in a highly polished arena before a crowd of complete strangers eating their food ; or, as if seized with an uncontrollable craving for the dance, you fling out after the joint for one wild gallop in an outer room, from which you return, perspiring and dyspeptic, to the consumption of an ice-pudding, before dashing forth to the final orgy at a picture-gallery,

where the walls are appropriately covered with pictures of barbaric women dressed for the hot weather.

That is what happened at this dinner. As soon as you had started a nice conversation with a lady a sort of roaring was heard without ; her eyes gleamed, her nostrils quivered like a horse planning a gallop, and in the middle of one of your best sentences she simply faded away with some horrible man at the other end of the table who was probably "the only man in London who can do the Double Straddle properly." This went on the whole of the meal, and it made connected conversation quite difficult. For my own part, I went on eating, and when I had properly digested I went out and looked at the little victims getting their money's worth.

From the door of the room where the dancing was done a confused uproar overflowed, as if several men of powerful physique were banging a number of pokers against a number of saucepans, and blowing whistles, and occasional catcalls, and now and then beating a drum and several sets of huge cymbals, and ceaselessly twanging at innumerable banjos, and at the same time singing in a foreign language, and shouting curses or exhortations or street-cries, or imitating hunting-calls and the cry of the hyena, or uniting suddenly in the war-whoop of some pitiless Sudan tribe.

It was a really terrible noise. It hit you like the back-blast of an explosion as you entered the room. There was no distinguishable tune. It was simply an enormous noise. But there was a kind of savage rhythm about it which made one think immediately of Indians and fierce men and the native camps one used to visit at the Earl's Court Exhibition. And this was not surprising. For the musicians included one genuine negro and three men with their faces blacked ; and the

noise and the rhythm were the authentic music of a negro village in South America, and the words which some genius had once set to the noise were an exhortation to go to the place where the negroes dwelt.

To judge by their movements, many of the dancers had, in fact, been there, and had carefully studied the best indigenous models. They were doing some quite extraordinary things. No two couples were doing quite the same thing for more than a few seconds, so that there was an endless variety of extraordinary postures. Some of them shuffled secretly along the edges of the room, their faces tense, their shoulders swaying like reeds in a light wind, their progress almost imperceptible; they did not rotate, they did not speak, but sometimes the tremor of a skirt or the slight stirring of a patent-leather shoe showed that they were indeed alive and in motion, though that motion was as the motion of a glacier, not to be measured in minutes or yards.

And some in a kind of fever rushed hither and thither among the thick crowd, avoiding disaster with marvellous dexterity; and sometimes they revolved slowly and sometimes quickly and sometimes spun giddily round for a moment like gyroscopic tops. Then they too would be seized with a kind of trance, or it may be with sheer shortness of breath, and hung motionless for a little in the centre of the room, while the mad throng jostled and flowed about them like the leaves in autumn round a dead bird.

And some did not revolve at all, but charged straightly up and down; and some of these thrust their loves for ever before them, as the Prussians thrust the villagers in the face of the enemy, and some for ever navigated themselves backwards like moving breakwaters to protect their darlings from the rude, precipitate seas.

Some of them kept themselves as upright as possible, swaying slightly like willows from the hips, and some of them contorted themselves into strange and angular shapes, now leaning perilously forward till they were practically lying upon their terrified partners, and now bending sideways as a man bends who has water in one ear after bathing. All of them clutched each other in a close and intimate manner, but some, as if by separation to intensify the joy of their union, or perhaps to secure greater freedom for some particularly spacious manœuvre, would part suddenly in the middle of the room and, clinging distantly with their hands, execute a number of complicated side-steps in opposite directions, or aim a series of vicious kicks at each other, after which they would reunite in a passionate embrace and gallop in a frenzy round the room, or fall into a trance, or simply fall down. If they fell down they lay still for a moment in the fearful expectation of death, as men lie who fall under a horse; and then they would creep on hands and knees to the wall through the whirling and indifferent crowd.

Watching them, you could not tell what any one couple would do next. The most placid and dignified among them might at any moment fling a leg out behind them and almost kneel in mutual adoration, and then, as if nothing unusual had happened, shuffle onward through the press; or, as though some electric mechanism had been set in motion, they would suddenly lift a foot sideways and stand on one leg. Poised pathetically, as if waiting for the happy signal when they might put the other leg down, these men looked very sad, and I wished that the Medusa's head might be smuggled somehow into the room for their attitudes to be imperishably recorded in cold stone; it would have been a valuable addition to modern sculpture.

Upon this whirlpool I embarked with the greatest misgiving and a strange young woman clinging to my person. The noise was deafening. The four black men were now all shouting at once and playing all their instruments at once, working up to the inconceivable uproar of the *finale*; and all the dancers began to dance with a last desperate fury. Bodies buffeted one from behind, and while one was yet looking round in apology or anger more bodies buffeted one from the flank. It was like swimming in a choppy sea, where there is no time to get the last wave out of your mouth before the next one hits you.

Close beside us a couple fell down with a great crash. I looked at them with concern, but no one else took any notice. On with the dance! Faster and faster the black men played. I was dimly aware now that they were standing on their chairs, bellowing, and fancied the end must be near. Then we were washed into a quiet backwater, in a corner, and from here I determined never to issue till the Last Banjo should indeed sound. Here I sidled vaguely about for a long time, hoping that I looked like a man preparing for some vast culminating feat, a side-step or a buzz or a double-jazz-spin or an ordinary fall down.

The noise suddenly ceased; the four black men had exploded.

"Very good exercises," my partner said.

"Quite," said I.

From "Light Articles Only"

ON HAVING A COLD

R. S. HOOPER

I HAVE a cold. Or rather my cold has begun. It is rather late this year, but three days ago it arrived. It invariably comes about this period of the winter, and stays for several months. This year it gave me quite a shock. The first of November dawned foggily on a snivelling world, and my cold was not there to greet me. As a rule, it turns up as regularly as clockwork in the last week of October. Naturally, I began to wonder what had happened to it. Something had obviously gone wrong, though where the hitch had occurred I knew not. It might have been the Gulf Stream or the Einstein theory, or perhaps a bit of both. I rather thought of ringing up my doctor and asking him what he advised me to do about it. Doctors realize full well the danger of any hiatus in the regular working of Nature, and mine, I knew, would have been rather upset by my obstinate condition. There was a lot of subdued influenza about, and here was I, after all these years, without a germ to my name or a handkerchief to my nose. By this time last year I was in the midst of an ever-rolling stream that bore all my friends away. The year before my nose became so rubicund, and at the same time so musical, that people used to ask me to play *O Ruddier than the Cherry* on my nasal guitarrrh. The year before that I broke the family record for sneezing, spent Christmas in bed, and was turned out of a charity *matinée* for coughing. Previous winters bear the same record of continuous suffering manfully and stoically endured. Being but a

poor creature of habit, you can quite understand my feeling of alarm which almost amounted to a disappointment. Another week without a sneeze and it would be a grievance. Pulling myself together, I determined not to telephone to the doctor. I would keep my troubles to myself. No one should know that beneath my smiling exterior there lurked the secret dread that all was not well. I felt like those ancient Greeks who loaded themselves with so much prosperity that the gods grew jealous and dispatched a thunderbolt, carriage forward, to cure them of their presumption. It was a drastic remedy, but it never failed to function. Supposing something like that happened to me? December would arrive without a sign of a sniff; the Christmas festivities would pass off without the vestige of a chill; February-fill-dyke would succeed January-blow-nose, and still I should be dry of eye and clear of lung. My chest would remain immune from the lingering aroma of goose-grease; my throat would leave unperformed the symphony of the gargle, now *crescendo*, now *diminuendo*, and finally *andante con molto troppo*. My inside would forget the thrill of its slice of cinnamon Melba and the pang of its first amalgamated puncture of quinine. March would come in like a lion and find me trembling with anticipation like a lamb. And then the thunderbolt would fall. The east winds would blow a million microbes into my system—the deadly nightshade, the deadlier night-light, the *bacillus angostura*, and all those other bacilli that make the rents so high in Harley Street. By April the first I should be down with pulmonary arthritis on my Jupiter Pluvius. Lynx-eyed specialists, grave-eyed doctors, and wall-eyed sisters would hover round my bed with hot-water bottles, s'deathoscopes, forceps, biceps, and all the grim impedimenta of a sick-room. April would draw to an

end and the spring would come. But I should not be Queen of the May. They would come and call me early, but I should not answer. Ah, no. Outside the birds would be singing their first vernal song, the croci would be opening their gaudy parasols to the sun, the wombat would be heard building his nest in the wistaria, while I . . . "Lower the blinds, Parkinson. Your master has gone. Heigho!"

When I think what I have been spared—what Parkinson has been spared—you can imagine the first signs of deliverance did not come amiss. To tell the truth, I was beginning to feel rather out of it. All my friends had colds and I had none. "How's your cold?" they would ask, blowing their noses heartily; and I would be forced to reply, feebly and uncomfortably, "I haven't got one." "Haven't got a cold? Good heavens, man! Everybody's got a cold. Had mine for days. Can't get rid of it. Most extraordinary the sort of colds every one's wearing this year. Quite different from last . . ." and so on. By the time mine did arrive everybody else would have forgotten theirs weeks ago. . . . No one would want to compare notes on our respective symptoms; no one would take any interest or sympathize. "Fancy having a cold now!" people would say. "I got rid of mine ages ago." These callous brutes would regard me with none of that fellow-feeling which borrows handkerchiefs and exchanges remedies.

No wonder then, three days ago, I awoke with a weight off my mind (which had transferred itself to my chest), and, sitting up in bed, cleared my throat and exclaimed with joy and thanksgiving, "I hab a gold—in by head, in by dose, on by jest. Alleluia!" By evening it was settling down nicely. But next morning I had a terrible shock. I thought it had gone. In

some way quite unintentionally I must have offended it the night before. At any rate, when I looked for it in the morning I couldn't find it. By breakfast there was no sign of it. After lunch I got on the track of it by going out without a coat on; by tea-time I could feel it returning slowly but surely; and by bed-time the reconciliation was complete. Yesterday I had a few anxious moments, but to-day its success is assured.

To-night I am going through the same old ceremony that has become almost a ritual. I shall eat as much as I can for dinner, pull the best armchair half-way into the fire, pile on the coal, close my eyes, and sink into a deep, stertorous coma. I shall be a very old man—or rather a young man with a very bad cold—my winter cold that is to last me well into the New Year. I shall say good-bye to it just before Easter—not harshly, but more in sorrow than in anger, for it is an old companion. I know its ways so well by now and it knows mine. We become a little distant as the months wear on, and sometimes it leaves me for a week or two, but always it comes back to find me ready to make it up again and let bygones be bygones. Meanwhile, to-night the little drama of welcoming the prodigal's return will go on. There is whisky, there is sugar, and there is water, though I cannot guarantee the lemon. I shall sip this nectar as I shiver in bed with a pain in my head and a sore throat that makes 'gasps' taste beastly—like real cigarettes. With the last mouthful I shall swallow with difficulty two aspirins and sink into a heavy sleep. Being wise and patient, I shall not cheat myself into thinking by doing all these things to cure my cold. No one can cure a cold. Some people, but very few, can prevent it coming by being careless and never wearing thick underclothes, but to

cure a cold when once it has come upon you—it is absurd. No. My cold has come. I drink hot drinks, I swallow tabloids, I embrace hot-water bottles, not because I am fool enough to think I shall cure it. Rather because, knowing that it will stay as long as it likes, I realize that old customs are old customs, and must be honoured; not in the breach, but in the observance. My cold expects it. It knows as well as I do that I shall be feeling no better in the morning. But by Easter . . . Who nose?

From "And the Next"

THE UNDERSTUDY

W. W. JACOBS

DOGS on board ship is a nuisance," said the night-watchman, gazing fiercely at the vociferous mongrel that had chased him from the deck of the *Henry William*; "the skipper asks me to keep an eye on the ship, and then leaves a thing like that down in the cabin."

He leaned against a pile of empty casks to recover his breath, shook his fist at the dog, and said, slowly:

Some people can't make too much of 'em. They talk about a dog's honest eyes and his faithful 'art. I 'ad a dog once, and I never saw his eyes look so honest as they did one day when 'e was sitting on a pound o' beefsteak we was 'unting high and low for.

I've known dogs to cause a lot of trouble in my time. A man as used to live in my street told me he 'ad been in jail three times because dogs follered him 'ome and wouldn't go away when he told 'em to. He said that some men would ha' kicked 'em out into the street, but he thought their little lives was far too valuable to risk in that way.

Some people used to wink when 'e talked like that, but I didn't: I remembered a dog that took a fancy to old Sam Small and Ginger Dick and Peter Russet once in just the same way.

It was one night in a little public-'ouse down Commercial Road way. They 'ad on'y been ashore a week, and, 'aving been turned out of a music-'all the night afore because a man Ginger Dick had punched in the jaw wouldn't behave 'imself, they said they'd spend

the rest o' their money on beer instead. There was just the three of 'em sitting by themselves in a cosy little bar, when the door was pushed open and a big black dog came in.

He came straight up to Sam and licked his 'and. Sam was eating a arrowroot biscuit with a bit o' cheese on it at the time. He wasn't wot you'd call a partickler sort o' man, but, seeing as 'ow the dog was so careless that 'e licked the biscuit a'most as much as he did his 'and, he gave it to 'im. The dog took it in one gulp, and then he jumped up on Sam's lap and wagged his tail in 'is face for joy and thankfulness.

"He's took a fancy to you, Sam," ses Ginger.

Sam pushed the dog off on to the floor and wiped his face.

"He's a good dog, by the look of 'im," ses Peter Russet, who was country bred.

He bought a sausage-roll, and him and the dog ate it between 'em. Then Ginger Dick bought one and gave it to 'im, and by the time it was finished the dog didn't seem to know which one of 'em he loved the most.

"Wonder who he belongs to?" ses Ginger. "Is there any name on the collar, Peter?"

Peter shook his 'ead. "It's a good collar, though," he ses. "I wonder whether he's been and lost 'imself?"

Old Sam, wot was always on the look-out for money, put his beer down and wiped 'is mouth. "There might be a reward out for 'im," he ses. "I think I'll take care of 'im for a day or two, in case."

"We'll all take care of 'im," ses Ginger; "and if there's a reward we'll go shares. Mind that!"

"I found 'im," ses Sam, very disagreeable. "He came up to me as if he'd known me all 'is life."

"No," ses Ginger. "Don't you flatter yourself. He came up to you because he didn't know you, Sam."

"If he 'ad, he'd ha' *bit* your 'and," ses Peter Russet.

"Instead o' washing it," ses Ginger.

"Go on!" ses Sam, 'olding his breath with passion.

"Go on!"

Peter opened 'is mouth, but just then another man came into the bar, and, arter ordering 'is drink, turned round and patted the dog's 'ead.

"That's a good dog; 'ow old is he?" he ses to Ginger.

"Two years last April," ses Ginger, without moving a eyelid.

"*Fifth* of April," ses old Sam, very quick and fierce.

"At two o'clock in the morning," ses Peter.

The man took up 'is beer and looked at 'em; then 'e took a drink and looked at 'em again. Arter which he 'ad another look at the dog.

"I could see 'e was very valuable," he ses. "I see that the moment I set eyes on 'im. Mind you don't get 'im stole."

He finished up 'is beer and went out; and he 'ad 'ardly gone afore Ginger took a piece o' thick string out of 'is pocket and fastened it to the dog's collar.

"Make yourself at 'ome, Ginger," ses Sam, very nasty.

"I'm going to," ses Ginger. "That chap knows something about dogs, and, if we can't get a reward for 'im, p'r'aps we can sell 'im."

They 'ad another arf-pint each, and then, Ginger taking 'old of the string, they went out into the street.

"Nine o'clock," ses Peter. "It's no good going 'ome yet, Ginger."

"We can 'ave a glass or two on the way," ses Ginger; "but I sha'n't feel comfortable in my mind till we've got the dog safe 'ome. P'r'aps the people wot 'ave lost it are looking for it now."

They 'ad another drink farther on, and a man in the bar took such a fancy to the dog that 'e offered Ginger five shillings for it and drinks round.

"That shows 'ow valuable it is," ses Peter Russet when they got outside. "Hold that string tight, Ginger. Wot's the matter?"

"He won't come," ses Ginger, tugging at the string. "Come on, old chap! Good dog! Come on!"

He stood there pulling at the dog, wot was sitting down and being dragged along on its stummick. He didn't know its name, but 'e called it a few things that seemed to ease 'is mind, and then he 'anded over the string to Sam, wot 'ad been asking for it, and told 'im to see wot *he* could do.

"We shall 'ave a crowd round us in a minute," ses Peter. "Mind you don't bust a blood-vessel, Sam."

"And be locked up for stealing it, p'r'aps," ses Ginger. "Better let it go, Sam."

"Wot, arter refusing five bob for it?" ses Sam. "Talk sense, Ginger, and give it a shove be'ind."

Ginger gave it a shove, but it was no good. There was three or four people coming along the road, and Sam made up 'is mind in an instant, and 'eld up his 'and to a cab that was passing.

It took the three of 'em to get the dog into the cab, and as soon as it was in the cabman told 'em to take it out agin. They argufied with 'im till their tongues ached, and at last, arter paying 'im four shillings and sixpence afore they started, he climbed up on the box and drove off.

The door was open when they got to their lodgings, but they 'ad to be careful because o' the landlady. It took the three of 'em to pull and push that dog upstairs, and Ginger took a dislike to dogs that 'e never really got over. They got 'im in the bedroom at last, and,

arter they 'ad given 'im a drink o' water out o' the wash-hand basin, Ginger and Peter started to find fault with Sam Small.

" I know wot I'm about," ses Sam ; " but, o' course, if you don't want your share, say so. Wot ? "

" Talk sense ! " ses Ginger. " We paid our share o' the cab, didn't we ? And more fools us."

" There won't be no share," ses Peter Russet ; " but if there is, we're going to 'ave it."

They undressed themselves and got into bed, and Ginger 'adn't been in his five minutes afore the dog started to get in with 'im. When Ginger pushed 'im off 'e seemed to think he was having a game with 'im, and, arter pretending to bite 'im in play, he took the end of the counterpane in 'is mouth and tried to drag it off.

" Why don't you get to sleep, Ginger ? " ses Sam, who was just dropping off. "'Ave a game with 'im in the morning."

Ginger gave the dog a punch in the chest, and, arter saying a few o' the things he'd like to do to Sam Small, he cuddled down in 'is bed and they all went off to sleep. All but the dog, that is. He seemed uneasy in 'is mind, and if 'e woke 'em up once by standing on his 'ind-legs and putting his forepaws on their chest to see if they was still alive, he did arf a dozen times.

He dropped off to sleep at last, scratching 'imself, but about three o'clock in the morning Ginger woke up with a 'orrible start and sat up in bed shivering. Sam and Peter woke up too, and, raising themselves in bed, looked at the dog, wot was sitting on its tail, with its 'ead back, moaning fit to break its 'art.

" Wot's the matter ? " ses old Sam, in a shaky voice. " Stop it ! Stop it, d'ye hear ? "

" P'r'aps it's dying," ses Ginger, as the dog let off

a 'owl like a steamer coming up the river. "Stop it, you brute!"

"He'll wake the 'ouse up in a minute," ses Peter. "Take 'im downstairs and kick 'im into the street, Sam."

"Take 'im yourself," ses Sam. "Hsh! Somebody's coming upstairs. Poor old doggie. Come along, then. Come along."

The dog left off his 'owling, and went over and licked 'im just as the landlady and one or two more came to the door and called out to know wot they meant by it.

"It's all right, missis," ses Sam. "It's on'y pore Ginger. You keep quiet," he ses in a whisper, turning to Ginger.

"Wot's he making that row about?" ses the landlady. "He made my blood run cold."

"He's got a touch o' toothache," ses Sam. "Never mind, Ginger," 'e ses in a hurry, as the dog let off another 'owl; "try and bear it."

"He's a coward, that's wot 'e is," ses the landlady, very fierce. "Why, a child o' five wouldn't make such a fuss."

"Sounds more like a dog than a 'uman being," ses another voice. "You come outside, Ginger, and I'll give you something to cry for."

They waited a minute or two, and then, everything being quiet, they went back to bed, while old Sam talked to Ginger about wot 'e called 'is "presence o' mind," and Ginger talked to 'im about wot he'd do to 'im if 'e wasn't a fat old man with one foot in the grave.

They was all in a better temper when they woke up in the morning, and while Sam was washing they talked about wot they was to do with the dog.

"We can't lead 'im about all day," ses Ginger; "and if we let 'im off the string he'll go off 'ome."

“ He don’t know where his ’ome is,” ses Sam, very severe ; “ but he might run away, and then the pore thing might be starved or else ill-treated. I ’ave ’eard o’ boys tying tin cans to their tails.”

“ I’ve done it myself,” ses Ginger, nodding.

“ Consequently it’s our dooty to look arter ’im,” ses Sam.

“ I’ll go down to the front door,” ses Peter, “ and when I whistle, bring him down.”

Ginger stuck his ’ead out o’ the window, and by and by, when Peter whistled, him and Sam took the dog downstairs and out into the street.

“ So far so good,” ses Sam ; “ now, wot about brekfuss ? ”

They ’ad their brekfuss in their usual coffee-shop, and the dog took bits from all of them. Unfortunately, ’e wasn’t used to haddick bones, and arter two of the customers ’ad gorn out and two more ’ad complained to the landlord, they ’ad to leave their brekfusses and take ’im outside for a breath o’ fresh air.

“ Now, wot are we going to do ? ” ses Ginger. “ I’m beginning to be sick of the sight of ’im. ’Ave we got to lead ’im about all day on a bit o’ string ? ”

“ Let’s take ’im round the corner and lose ’im,” ses Peter Russet.

“ You give me ’old o’ that string,” ses Sam. “ If you don’t want shares, that’s all right. If I’m going to look arter ’im I’ll ’ave it all.”

That made Ginger and Peter look at each other. Direckly Sam began to talk about money they began to think they might be losing something.

“ And wot about ’aving ’im in our bedroom and keeping us awake all night ? ” ses Peter.

“ And putting it on to me with the toothache,” ses Ginger. “ No ; you can look arter ’im, Sam, while

me and Peter goes off and enjoys ourselves ; and if you get anything we go shares, mind."

" All right," ses Sam, turning away with the dog.

" And suppose Sam gets a reward or sells it, and then tells us that it ran away and 'e lost it ? " ses Peter.

" O' course ; I never thought o' that," ses Ginger.

" You've got your 'ead on straight, Peter."

" I see 'im smile, that's why," ses Peter Russet.

" You're a liar," ses Sam.

" We'll stick together," ses Ginger. " Leastways, one of us'll keep with you, Sam."

They settled it that way at last, and while Ginger went for a walk down round about where they 'ad found the dog, Sam Small and Peter waited for him in a little public-'ouse down Limehouse way. Their idea was that there would be bills up, and when Ginger came back and said there wasn't, they 'ad a lot to say about people wot wasn't fit to 'ave dogs because they didn't love 'em.

They 'ad a miserable day. When the dog got sick o' sitting in a pub 'e made such a noise they 'ad to take 'im out ; and when 'e got tired o' walking about he sat down on the pavement and they 'ad to drag 'im along to the nearest pub agin. At five o'clock in the artemnoon Ginger Dick was talking about two'penn'orth o' rat-poison.

" Wo, are we to do with 'im till twelve o'clock to-night ? " ses Peter.

" And s'pose we can't smuggle 'im into the 'ouse agin ? " ses Ginger. " Or suppose he makes that noise agin in the night ? "

They 'ad a pint each to 'elp them to think wot was to be done. And, arter a lot o' talking and quarrelling, they did wot a lot of other people 'ave done when they got into trouble : they came to me.

I 'ad on'y been on dooty about arf an hour when the three of 'em turned up at the wharf with the dog, and, arter saying 'ow well I looked and that I seemed to get younger every time they saw me, they asked me to take charge of the dog for 'em.

"It'll be company for you," ses old Sam. "It must be very lonely 'ere of a night. I've often thought of it."

"And of a day-time you could take it 'ome and tie it up in your back-yard," ses Ginger.

I wouldn't 'ave anything to do with it at fust, but at last I gave way. They offered me fourpence a day for its keep, and, as I didn't want to run any risk, I made 'em give me a couple o' bob to go on with.

They went off as though they'd left a load o' care be'ind 'em, and arter tying the dog up to a crane I went on with my work. They 'adn't told me wot the game was, but, from one or two things they'd let drop, I'd got a pretty good idea.

The dog 'owled a bit at fust, but he quieted down arter a bit. He was a nice-looking animal, but one dog is much the same as another to me, and if I 'ad one ten years I don't suppose I could pick it out from two or three others.

I took it off 'ome with me when I left at six o'clock next morning, and tied it up in my yard. My missis 'ad words about it, o' course—that's wot people get married for—but when she found it woke me up three times she quieted down and said wot a nice coat it 'ad got.

The three of 'em came round next evening to see it, and they was so afraid of its being lost that when they stood me a pint at the Bull's Head we 'ad to take it with us. Ginger was going to buy a sausage-roll for it, but, arter Sam 'ad pointed out that they was paying

me fourpence a day for its keep, he didn't. And Sam 'ad the cheek to tell me that it liked a nice bit o' fried steak as well as anything.

A lot o' people admired that dog. I remember, on the fourth night I think it was, the barge *Dauntless* came alongside, and arter she was made fast the skipper came ashore and took a little notice of it.

"Where did you get 'im?" he ses.

I told 'im 'ow it was, and he stood there for some time patting the dog on the 'ead and whistling under 'is breath.

"It's much the same size as my dog," he ses; "that's a black retriever too."

I ses "Oh!"

"I'm afraid I shall 'ave to get rid of it," he ses. "It's on the barge now. My missis won't 'ave it in the 'ouse any more cos it bit the baby. And o' course it was no good p'inting out to 'er that it was its first bite. Even the law allows one bite, but it's no good talking about the law to wimmen."

"Except when it's on their side," I ses.

He patted the dog's 'ead agin and whistled, and a big black dog came up out of the cabin and sprang ashore. It went up and put its nose to Sam's dog, and they both growled like thunderstorms.

"Might be brothers," ses the skipper, "on'y your dog's got a better 'ead and a better coat. It's a good dog."

"They're all alike to me," I ses. "I couldn't tell 'em apart, not if you paid me."

The skipper stood there a moment, and then he ses: "I wish you'd let me see 'ow my dog looks in your dog's collar," he ses.

"Whaffor?" I ses.

"On'y fancy," he ses. "Oh, Bill!"

"Yes," I ses.

"It ain't Christmas," he ses, taking my arm and walking up and down a bit, "but it will be soon, and then I mightn't see you. You've done me one or two good turns, and I should like to make you a Christmas-box of three arf-dollars."

I let 'im give 'em to me, and then, just to please 'im, I let 'im try the collar on 'is dog, while I swept up a bit.

"It looked beautiful on 'im," he ses, when I'd finished; "but I've put it back agin. Come on, Bruno. Good night, Bill."

He got 'is dog on the barge agin arter a bit o' trouble, and arter making sure that my dog 'ad got its own collar on I went on with my work.

The dog didn't seem to be quite 'imself next day, and he was so fierce in the yard that my missis was afraid to go near 'im. I was going to ask the skipper about it, as 'e seemed to know more about dogs than I did, but when I got to the wharf the barge had sailed.

It was just getting dark when there came a ring at the gate-bell, and afore I could answer it arf a dozen more, as fast as the bell could go. And when I opened the wicket Sam Small and Ginger and Peter Russet all tried to get in at once.

"Where's the dog?" ses Sam.

"Tied up," I ses. "Wot's the matter? 'Ave you all gorn mad?"

They didn't answer me. They ran on to the jetty, and afore I could turn round a'most they 'ad got the dog loose and was dragging it towards me, smiling all over their faces.

"Reward," ses Ginger, as I caught 'old of 'im by the coat. "Five pounds—landlord of a pub—at Bow—come on, Sam!"

"Why don't you keep your mouth shut, Ginger?" ses Sam.

"Five pounds!" I ses. "Five pounds! Hurrah!"

"Wot are you hurrying about?" ses Sam, very short.

"Why," I ses, "I s'pose—— Here, arf a moment!"

"Can't stop," ses Sam, going arter the others.

I watched 'em up the road, and then I locked the gate and walked up and down the wharf thinking wot a funny thing money is, and 'ow it alters people's natures. And arter all, I thought that three arf-dollars earned honest was better than a reward for hiding another man's dog.

I finished tidying up, and at nine o'clock I went into the office for a quiet smoke. I couldn't 'elp wondering 'ow them three 'ad got on, and just as I was thinking about it there came the worst ringing at the gate-bell I 'ave ever 'eard in my life, and the noise of heavy boots kicking the gate. It was so violent I 'ardly liked to go at fust, thinking it might be bad news, but I opened it at last, and in bust Sam Small, with Ginger and Peter.

For five minutes they all talked at once, with their nasty fists 'eld under my nose. I couldn't make 'ead or tail of it at fust, and then I found as 'ow they 'ad got the dog back with them, and that the landlord 'ad said 'e wasn't the one.

"But 'e said as he thought the collar was his," ses Sam. "'Ow do you account for that?"

"P'r'aps he made a mistake," I ses; "or p'r'aps he thought you'd turn the dog adrift and he'd get it back for nothing. You know wot landlords are. Try 'im agin."

"I'd pretty well swear he ain't the same dog," ses

Peter Russet, looking in a puzzled way at Sam and Ginger.

“ You take 'im back to-morrow night,” I ses. “ It's a nice walk to Bow. And then come back and beg my pardon. I want to 'ave a word with this policeman here. Good night.”

From “Night Watches ”

HOW HARRIS LOST HIS WIFE

JEROME K. JEROME

THERE is always unpleasantness about this tandem. It is the theory of the man in front that the man behind does nothing; it is equally the theory of the man behind that he alone is the motive power, the man in front merely doing the puffing. The mystery will never be solved. It is annoying when Prudence is whispering to you on the one side not to overdo your strength and bring on heart disease; while Justice into the other ear is remarking, "Why should you do it all? This isn't a cab. He's not your passenger": to hear him grunt out:

"What's the matter—lost your pedals?"

Harris, in his early married days, made much trouble for himself on one occasion, owing to this impossibility of knowing what the person behind is doing. He was riding with his wife through Holland. The roads were stony, and the machine jumped a good deal.

"Sit tight," said Harris, without turning his head.

What Mrs Harris thought he said was, "Jump off." Why she should have thought he said "Jump off," when he said "Sit tight," neither of them can explain.

Mrs Harris puts it this way, "If you had said, 'Sit tight,' why should I have jumped off?"

Harris puts it, "If I had wanted you to jump off, why should I have said 'Sit tight!'?"

The bitterness is past, but they argue about the matter to this day.

Be the explanation what it may, however, nothing alters the fact that Mrs Harris did jump off, while

Harris pedalled away hard, under the impression she was still behind him. It appears that at first she thought he was riding up the hill merely to show off. They were both young in those days, and he used to do that sort of thing. She expected him to spring to earth on reaching the summit, and lean in a careless and graceful attitude against the machine, waiting for her. When, on the contrary, she saw him pass the summit and proceed rapidly down a long and steep incline, she was seized, first with surprise, secondly with indignation, and lastly with alarm. She ran to the top of the hill and shouted, but he never turned his head. She watched him disappear into a wood a mile and a half distant, and then sat down and cried. They had had a slight difference that morning, and she wondered if he had taken it seriously and intended desertion. She had no money; she knew no Dutch. People passed, and seemed sorry for her; she tried to make them understand what had happened. They gathered that she had lost something, but could not grasp what. They took her to the nearest village, and found a policeman for her. He concluded from her pantomime that some man had stolen her bicycle. They put the telegraph into operation, and discovered in a village four miles off an unfortunate boy riding a lady's machine of an obsolete pattern. They brought him to her in a cart, but as she did not appear to want either him or his bicycle they let him go again, and resigned themselves to bewilderment.

Meanwhile Harris continued his ride with much enjoyment. It seemed to him that he had suddenly become a stronger, and in every way a more capable cyclist. Said he to what he thought was Mrs Harris:

"I haven't felt this machine so light for months. It's this air, I think; it's doing me good."

Then he told her not to be afraid, and he would show her how fast he *could* go. He bent down over the handles, and put his heart into his work. The bicycle bounded over the road like a thing of life; farmhouses and churches, dogs and chickens came to him and passed. Old folks stood and gazed at him, the children cheered him.

In this way he sped merrily onward for about five miles. Then, as he explains it, the feeling began to grow upon him that something was wrong. He was not surprised at the silence; the wind was blowing strongly, and the machine was rattling a good deal. It was a sense of void that came upon him. He stretched out his hand behind him, and felt; there was nothing there but space. He jumped, or rather fell, off, and looked back up the road; it stretched white and straight through the dark wood, and not a living soul could be seen upon it. He remounted, and rode back up the hill. In ten minutes he came to where the road broke into four; there he dismounted and tried to remember which fork he had come down.

While he was deliberating a man passed, sitting sideways on a horse. Harris stopped him, and explained to him that he had lost his wife. The man appeared to be neither surprised nor sorry for him. While they were talking another farmer came along, to whom the first man explained the matter, not as an accident, but as a good story. What appeared to surprise the second man most was that Harris should be making a fuss about the thing. He could get no sense out of either of them, and cursing them he mounted his machine again, and took the middle road on chance. Half-way up, he came upon a party of two young women with one young man between them. They appeared to be making the most of him. He asked them if they had

seen his wife. They asked him what she was like. He did not know enough Dutch to describe her properly ; all he could tell them was she was a very beautiful woman, of medium size. Evidently this did not satisfy them, the description was too general ; any man could say that, and by this means perhaps get possession of a wife that did not belong to him. They asked him how she was dressed ; for the life of him he could not recollect.

I doubt if any man could tell how any woman was dressed ten minutes after he had left her. He recollected a blue skirt, and then there was something that carried the dress on, as it were, up to the neck. Possibly this may have been a blouse ; he retained a dim vision of a belt ; but what sort of a blouse ? Was it green, or yellow, or blue ? Had it a collar, or was it fastened with a bow ? Were there feathers in her hat, or flowers ? Or was it a hat at all ? He dared not say, for fear of making a mistake and being sent miles after the wrong party. The two young women giggled, which in his then state of mind irritated Harris. The young man, who appeared anxious to get rid of him, suggested the police-station at the next town. Harris made his way there. The police gave him a piece of paper, and told him to write down a full description of his wife, together with details of when and where he had lost her. He did not know where he had lost her ; all he could tell them was the name of the village where he had lunched. He knew he had her with him then, and that they had started from there together.

The police looked suspicious ; they were doubtful about three matters : Firstly, was she really his wife ? Secondly, had he really lost her ? Thirdly, why had he lost her ? With the aid of a hotelkeeper, however, who spoke a little English, he overcame their scruples.

They promised to act, and in the evening they brought her to him in a covered waggon, together with a bill for expenses. The meeting was not a tender one. Mrs Harris is not a good actress, and always has great difficulty in disguising her feelings. On this occasion, she frankly admits, she made no attempt to disguise them.

From " Three Men on the Bummel "

THE THIRD BATHE

E. V. KNOX

I SHALL bathe again. I do not care what they say. Nothing shall stop me. I shall bathe again. I shall proceed down the shore gently flapping my gown, and wallow and float and swim under a blue sky in water which is unruffled, glittering with sunshine, and not cold but cool. In water also which is just conveniently deep. I shall not have very long to live afterwards, I suppose, if all they tell me is true, and I should like to take the opportunity of saying farewell to anyone who may happen to read this article. About to bathe, I salute him. He may have my white mouse and the bound volume of *Chatterbox*. In a very few moments now . . .

Whenever the force of circumstances compels me to leave my home during the month of August, and the place to which I am to be taken has, after long argument, been decided, I always ask first, "Is there sea there?"

Some people regard the sea historically, commercially, or poetically. I prefer to look at it as one of the triumphs of municipal progress, like paving or gas. If I am told that there is sea there I say, "How splendid! Then we shall be able to bathe."

But why I say "How splendid!" I really do not know, for nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the state of British bathing at the present time. Nearly all the savageries of Nature and the restrictive regulations of mankind have been enlisted to make it so.

Only philosophy, a philosophy that does not fear death, a philosophy like mine, can conquer them.

Theoretically, the number of days on which it is possible to bathe off the British coast is three hundred and sixty-five. At no period of the year is any portion of the British coast ice-bound or dangerously infested with sharks. Practically, however, the number of days is about twenty-three. Obviously, it becomes a matter of the flimsiest chance whether any of those twenty-three days coincide with any of the days on which the Briton has dealings with the sea.

But the trouble is not ended here.

There is a very detestable type of man who insists on bathing in the early morning before breakfast. He suborns accomplices, and one goes out to find the sea grey, ruffled, and inhospitable, having obviously passed a bad night. It is agitated. It is heaving. There are white horses upon it. It is in a kind of condition when it wants breasting. You cannot fool about in it, you cannot wallow, you cannot float. Nothing but breasting will do. You get into it and find that it is even worse than it looks, and tastes worse still. Without professing to be a *gourmet*, I may say that I have rolled round my tongue a fairly considerable number of brands of the British sea. There is the light and heady Atlantic; the glutinous yet stimulating tippie of Scarborough and Skegness; but for real body commend me to the little-known chalk vintage of Rottingdean. There is a strong, gritty flavour about the kind here. . . . But I digress.

When one has tasted and breasted for five minutes of deep suffering, one gets out and returns. There may be those—in fact, I feel sure there are those—whose characters are fortified by sorrow. They are the people for whose sake bathing before breakfast in the

sea was given to us. They come purged, as it were, out of great tribulation and find that life has a newer and fuller meaning for them. They are more tolerant and kindly towards their fellow-men. I am not like that. I simply get a chill on the liver. Always after an experience like this I decide that the time for bathing, so far as I am concerned, is not before breakfast ; and those who have breakfast with me invariably agree.

I have bathed before breakfast to-day.

The obvious time for bathing is much later, when the universe has become a little warmer and the chill, more or less, has been taken off the sea. I say more or less because the sea has never really been anything but chilly, ever. One should bathe, for example, about noon. But when you look out of the window you find that the sea has gone about half-way across to France or America, as the case may be. In my case it was France. One cannot help looking a fool as one pursues a reluctant sea half-way to France at about eleven-thirty in the forenoon merely in order to wet oneself all over without lying down. The white cliffs of Kent become a mere far-away glimmer. Anybody would suppose that one was going to settle the Ruhr problem off one's own bat. What I have never been able to discover is whether the fellows who swim the Channel are obliged to keep their feet off the ground all the way, or whether that counts as a foul. In wading, one thinks of many things of that sort in the intervals between the sharper pebbles. I suppose that will be Dieppe over there. . . .

I bathed at eleven-thirty this morning.

When I returned to the British coast I found a man standing beside a boat. He was ruminating, and seemed to be a man versed in the ways of the sea.

"I want you to tell me," I said to him, "what time to-day the sea will be just up to here?"

And I indicated with my forefinger a spot where the beach rose up sharply like the end of a bath.

"It will be high tide——" he began.

"I don't want to know anything about tides," I said to him gently. "I'm not a mariner. I'm not even a Younger Brother of Trinity House. I only want to know when the sea will be just up to here." And I indicated the required spot again.

"'Bout har-par-five," he said.

I went home and had a very large lunch. After that I went to sleep. When I woke up I ate a very large tea. Then I looked out of the window, and sure enough the man was right. The sea had come right up to the deep end of the shore. In about half an hour there would be enough of it for a thorough bath. The surface of the water was calm and bright, the sky was radiantly blue.

I immediately announced my momentous decision.

"I shall bathe," I said, "again."

There was a febrile chorus of protest.

"You can't possibly bathe again," they said.

"You've bathed twice already."

"You can't possibly bathe now," they said. "You've just had a heavy meal."

"Hearty," I said, "not heavy."

"It's really very dangerous," said my sister. "I heard of a man who bathed three times and got cramp and died."

"I heard of a man," I rejoined, "who refused to bathe more than once, and he was bitten by a jelly-fish that time, and caught scarlatina."

"You'll be horribly tired when you come out," said

my brother-in-law. "You'd much better wait till to-morrow and go in before breakfast."

"I'm going to bathe once before breakfast to-morrow," I said, "and I'm going to do it now."

"Any doctor would forbid you," said my sister. "You'd much better bathe at midday to-morrow."

"Never at midday again," I said. "My French isn't good enough. I have a short article to write, and then I shall bathe."

And bathe I shall.

From "An Hour from Victoria"

MARIA ON POETRY

MRS JOHN LANE

MARIA hung over the bannisters and called to me to come up to Diana's room. Maria's voice was full of drama. I was rather surprised as I knew Diana was out, for it was her day for the gymnastics she so hated. I found Maria in possession, and she was on a tour of conscientious inspection. The familiar, disorderly little room in which Diana and I held converse had delivered up all its secrets, and it seemed to have been struck by an awful tornado of order.

Maria stood in the middle with flushed cheeks, a look of despair, and a duster. She had penetrated into Diana's Holiest of Holies, and what Diana had hoarded as sacred Maria confiscated as "clutter." "Dirty clutter," she added, and then she threw on the battered old table a dog-eared copy-book which she had ruthlessly torn from its constant companion in the upper drawer, Diana's hairbrush.

The old copy-book looked forlornly at me from the table; it was an old friend of mine and the confidant of Diana's aspirations and emotions, and out of it Diana used to read me samples of her own poetry which were never intended for Maria's eye, and I could not but feel that Maria's eye would act on them like a blight.

For the first time the widowed hairbrush lay by itself in the upper drawer and all poor Diana's disorders and soul secrets lay exposed to a cold scrutiny. A withered rose tied with a bit of blue ribbon entangled in a sticky

coughdrop, fell, as the first victim, into the paper-basket.

"Isn't it too dreadful?" and Maria sighed. Language failed her.

"She seems to love dust. What will become of her?"

"She'll outgrow it," I said soothingly. "Dust and disorder are natural to all young things. Don't you remember at school, Maria, you used to go to bed in your boots, so as to save putting them on in the morning?"

"I didn't!" Maria retorted.

"You did," I said; and she did. We looked at each other. But it is surprising how soon parents forget. One would think by the way they act that parents are born ready-made parents, and flawless.

"And now see what you are," I urged admiringly, as Maria sat down and fluttered the leaves of the old copy-book.

"Anyhow, I never wasted any time doing this," she said scornfully. "Poetry! A child of mine write poetry! Well, I never did! And doesn't it look smudgy? Just what I should expect of Diana's poetry."

And indeed Diana's inspirations required a very soft pencil.

Still Maria prided herself on being just. And she would even be just with poetry although she disapproved of it.

"I dare say there's no harm in writing poetry," she admitted as she turned over the dingy leaves, "if one has nothing else to do, or if one's married. I can't imagine from whom she takes it; Samuel don't write poetry, and I wouldn't if I could. Now just hear this: 'Unrequited Love.' At her age, too, and with such an appetite. Diana and unrequited love. Isn't it

awful? And here's a 'Sea Tragedy.' Sea tragedy, indeed. And all she knows about the sea was when we took her to Dieppe and she was so dreadfully seasick. And now she writes poetry about it. I must say they warned me at school. Poetry!" she cried, with infinite disdain. "Why people ever write poetry I can't imagine. I always wonder who reads it; I wouldn't for worlds. But, to be sure, I've been told that people make loads of money writing it. Isn't it queer? For I call it silly stuff, I do really," and Maria shook her head.

"Now I just want you to tell me, did you ever hear anybody talk poetry? I never did—that is, only once," and she paused conscientiously, "when I was taken over a lunatic asylum by the wife of a doctor who lived there. She pointed out a little old woman who thought she was Bacon—I mean, of course, the man who thought he wrote Shakespeare," Maria explained with some forbearance, as I looked puzzled, "and she recited very nice poetry to us, quite as good as Shakespeare, I thought," she added critically; "she said a good deal in poetry about the porridge she had for breakfast always being burnt, and I couldn't help thinking how much better it would have sounded in prose, poor thing. And I must say even when I hear Shakespeare he doesn't sound natural, and I can't really say I like him unless he is covered by scenery. But what I do feel is he's so respectable—nearly as respectable as the Bible. That is the reason I always take Diana to Shakespeare; he is so safe. One always knows what he's going to say. And then, too, one is always so glad when he's over, and quite ready to go home, and one never really cares if they get each other at the end or not, and that makes it so nice about one's wraps and things, for one can begin to put them

on before the end. But I can't make Samuel go to Shakespeare. He got him as a prize at school and he used to have to read him to his father of an evening when he was sleepy, that is, when Samuel was sleepy, and he's hated him ever since. Still, I can't imagine what schools and children would do without Shakespeare, can you?

"Then there is Milton," and Maria warmed to her subject. "I used to have Milton in my grammar lessons, and we had to parse him. Gracious, how we did loathe him! And as if that was not bad enough, Aunt Martha gave him to us as a wedding-present when she knew perfectly well that I wanted a sugar-bowl. But there! people are so inconsiderate. You don't wonder that I wouldn't name Diana after her, do you? But isn't it dreadful to think that Diana's taken to writing poetry at her age? But she shan't publish a thing till there isn't a single chance left of her getting married. Then I don't care what happens: she can write poetry or 'slum' or 'vote' or anything else, for I suppose by that time she'll have to do something to take up her time.

"Still, when one sees how popular Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth are—we never did think much of Byron; and the days I used to spend trying to find the things in him I oughtn't to read!—and how one finds them in every family, even if nobody reads them, perhaps by that time Diana might just as well publish as not, and I dare say she'll make a lot of money. You just think how much money is made out of poetry every year," and Maria looked steadily at me. "There isn't a Christmas that I don't get a book of poetry I don't want. And now they've such a way of tying them up that they quite deceive you, and you think it's something interesting. Though I must say I do

lose patience," she added, with some warmth, "when people write inside and one can't give it away again.

"But don't people who write have an easy time? Now I feel positive that the very biggest kind of a novel wouldn't cost more than five shillings for paper and possibly tuppence for ink, and yet I've heard that some people who write novels make more than Smith Limited with shops all over London, and goodness knows how much they pay in rent. I call that unfair. And when it comes to poetry I don't suppose the paper Shakespeare used cost fivepence, including a pencil—Diana always writes with pencil—and what they ask for one copy when I want to buy one, only I never do, is just wicked!

"And now that times are so bad and so many people are out of work, I do wonder why more don't go in for writing poetry as a business; they don't have to work, real work I mean, and they don't have to learn anything, or keep an office. They don't have to take a bus and go somewhere every morning, and if they don't want to they needn't get up. All the same they are written about in the *Morning Post* just as if they were somebody, and the smartest kind of people invite them to dinner, and nobody cares whether they go to church or not. I really can't understand it," and Maria sighed as if the problem was too deep for her, "and sometimes I think if Diana insists on writing poetry after she is too old to get married she might do worse. But whatever she does," Maria concluded impressively, "I hope she will always write poetry like a lady."

From "According to Maria"

OXFORD AS I SEE IT

STEPHEN LEACOCK

MY private profession being that of a university professor, I was naturally deeply interested in the system of education in England. I was therefore led to make a special visit to Oxford and to submit the place to a searching scrutiny. Arriving one afternoon at four o'clock, I stayed at the Mitre Hotel and did not leave until eleven o'clock next morning. The whole of this time, except for one hour spent in addressing the undergraduates, was devoted to a close and eager study of the great university. When I add to this that I had already visited Oxford in 1907 and spent a Sunday at All Souls with Colonel L. S. Amery, it will be seen at once that my views on Oxford are based upon observations extending over fourteen years.

At any rate, I can at least claim that my acquaintance with the British university is just as good a basis for reflection and judgment as that of the numerous English critics who come to our side of the water. I have known a famous English author arrive at Harvard University in the morning, have lunch with President Lowell, and do an entire book on the Decline of Serious Study in America. Or take the case of my own university. I remember Mr Rudyard Kipling coming to McGill and saying in his address to the undergraduates at 2.30 P.M., "You have here a great institution." But how could he have gathered this information? So far as I knew, he spent the entire morning with Sir Andrew Macphail in his house beside the campus, smoking

cigarettes. When I add that he distinctly refused to visit the Palæontologic Museum, that he saw nothing of our new hydraulic apparatus or of our classes in domestic science, his judgment that we had here a great institution seems a little bit superficial. I can only put beside it, to redeem it in some measure, the hasty and ill-formed judgment expressed by Lord Milner, "McGill is a noble university," and the rash and indiscreet expression of the Prince of Wales, when we gave him an LL.D. degree, "McGill has a glorious future."

To my mind these unthinking judgments about our great college do harm, and I determined, therefore, that anything that I said about Oxford should be the actual observation and real study based upon a *bona fide* residence in the Mitre Hotel.

On the strength of this basis of experience I am prepared to make the following positive and emphatic statements.

Oxford is a noble university. It has a great past. It is at present the greatest university in the world; and it is quite possible that it has a great future. Oxford trains scholars of the real type better than any other place in the world. Its methods are antiquated. It despises science. It has professors who never teach and students who never learn. It has no order, no arrangement, no system. Its curriculum is unintelligible. It has no present. It has no State legislature to tell it how to teach, and yet—it gets there. Whether we like it or not, Oxford gives something to its students, a life and a mode of thought, which in America as yet we can emulate, but not equal.

If anybody doubts this let him go and take a room at the Mitre Hotel (ten and six for a wainscoted bedroom, period of Charles I) and study the place for himself.

These singular results achieved at Oxford are all the more surprising when one considers the distressing conditions under which the students work. The lack of an adequate building fund compels them to go on working in the same old buildings which they have had for centuries. The buildings at Wadham College have not been renewed since the year 1605. In Merton and Magdalen the students are still housed in the old buildings erected in the fourteenth century. At Christ Church College I was shown a kitchen which had been built at the expense of Cardinal Wolsey in 1525. Incredible though it may seem, they have no other place to cook in than this, and are compelled to use it to-day. On the day when I saw this kitchen, four cooks were busy roasting an ox whole for the students' lunch—this, at least, is what I presumed they were doing, from the size of the fireplace used; but it may not have been an ox; perhaps it was a cow. On a huge table, twelve feet by six and made of slabs of wood five inches thick, two other cooks were rolling out a game pie. I estimated it as measuring three feet across. In this rude way, unchanged since the time of Henry VIII, the unhappy Oxford students are fed. I could not help contrasting it with the cozy little boarding-houses on Cottage Grove Avenue where I used to eat when I was a student at Chicago, or the charming little basement dining-rooms of the students' boarding-houses in Toronto. But then, of course, Henry VIII never lived in Toronto.

The same lack of a building fund necessitates the Oxford students' living in the identical old boarding-houses they had in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Technically they are called quadrangles, closes, and 'rooms,' but I am so broken in to the usage of my student days that I can't help calling them

boarding-houses. In many of these the old stairway has been worn down by the feet of ten generations of students ; the windows have little latticed panes ; there are old names carved here and there upon the stone, and a thick growth of ivy covers the walls. The boarding-house at St John's College dates from 1555 ; the one at Brasenose, from 1509. A few hundred thousand pounds would suffice to replace these old buildings with neat steel-and-brick structures like the normal school at Schenectady, New York, or the Peel Street High School at Montreal. But nothing is done. A movement was, indeed, attempted last autumn toward removing the ivy from the walls, but the result was unsatisfactory and they are putting it back. Any-one could have told them beforehand that the mere removal of the ivy would not brighten Oxford up, unless at the same time one cleared the stones of the old inscriptions, put in steel fire-escapes, and, in fact, brought the boarding-houses up to date.

But Henry VIII being dead, nothing was done. Yet, in spite of its dilapidated buildings and its lack of fire-escapes, ventilation, sanitation, and up-to-date kitchen facilities, I persist in my assertion that I believe that Oxford, in its way, is the greatest university in the world. I am aware that this is an extreme statement and needs explanation. Oxford is much smaller in numbers, for example, than the State University of Minnesota, and is much poorer. It has, or had till yesterday, fewer students than the University of Toronto. To mention Oxford beside the 26,000 students of Columbia University sounds ridiculous. In point of money, the \$30,000,000 endowment of the University of Chicago, and the \$35,000,000 one of Columbia, and the \$43,000,000 one of Harvard seem to leave Oxford nowhere. Yet the peculiar thing is

that it is not nowhere. By some queer process of its own it seems to get there every time. It was, therefore, of the very greatest interest to me, as a profound scholar, to try to investigate just how this peculiar excellence of Oxford arises.

It has hardly been due to anything in the curriculum or programme of studies. Indeed, to anyone accustomed to the best models of a university curriculum as it flourishes in the United States and Canada, the programme of studies is frankly quite laughable. There is less applied science in the place than would be found with us in a theological college. Hardly a single professor at Oxford would recognize a dynamo if he met it in broad daylight. The Oxford student learns nothing of chemistry, physics, heat, plumbing, electric wiring, gas-fitting, or the use of a blow-torch. Any American college student can run a motor-car, take a gasoline engine to pieces, fix a washer on a kitchen tap, mend a broken electric bell, and give an expert opinion on what has gone wrong with the furnace. It is these things, indeed, which stamp him as a college man and occasion a very pardonable pride in the minds of his parents. But in all these things the Oxford student is the merest amateur.

This is bad enough. But, after all, one might say this is only the mechanical side of education. True; but one searches in vain in the Oxford curriculum for any adequate recognition of the higher and more cultured students. Strange though it seems to us on this side of the Atlantic, there are no courses at Oxford in Housekeeping, or in Salesmanship, or in Advertising, or on Comparative Religion, or on the Influence of the Press. There are no lectures whatever on Human Behaviour, on Altruism, on Egotism, or on the Play of Wild Animals. Apparently the Oxford student does

not learn these things. This cuts him off from a great deal of the larger culture of our side of the Atlantic. "What are you studying this year?" I once asked a fourth-year student at one of our great colleges. "I am electing Salesmanship and Religion," he answered. Here was a young man whose training was destined inevitably to turn him into a moral business man; either that or nothing. At Oxford salesmanship is not taught, and religion takes the feeble form of the New Testament. The more one looks at these things the more amazing it becomes that Oxford can produce any results at all.

The effect of the comparison is heightened by the peculiar position occupied at Oxford by the professor's lectures. In the colleges of Canada and the United States the lectures are supposed to be a really necessary and useful part of the student's training. Again and again I have heard the graduates of my own college assert that they had got as much, or nearly as much, out of the lectures at college as out of athletics or the Greek-letter Society or the Banjo and Mandolin Club. In short, with us the lectures form a real part of the college life. At Oxford it is not so. The lectures, I understand, are given and may even be taken. But they are quite worthless, and are not supposed to have anything much to do with the development of the student's mind. "The lectures here," said a Canadian student to me, "are punk." I appealed to another student to know if this was so. "I don't know whether I'd call them exactly punk," he answered, "but they're certainly rotten." Other judgments were that the lectures were of no importance; that nobody took them; that they don't matter; that you can take them if you like; that they do you no harm.

It appears further that the professors themselves are

not keen on their lectures. If the lectures are called for they give them; if not, the professor's feelings are not hurt. He merely waits and rests his brain until in some later year the students call for his lectures. There are men at Oxford who have rested their brains this way for over thirty years; the accumulated brain-power thus dammed up is said to be colossal.

I understand that the key to this mystery is found in the operations of the person called the tutor. It is from him, or rather with him, that the students learn all that they know; one and all are agreed on that. Yet it is a little odd to know just how he does it. "We go over to his rooms," said one student, "and he just lights a pipe and talks to us." "We sit round with him," said another, "and he simply smokes and goes over our exercises with us." From this and other evidence I gather that what an Oxford tutor does is to get a little group of students together and smoke at them. Men who have been systematically smoked at for four years turn into ripe scholars. If anybody doubts this, let him go to Oxford and he can see the thing actually in operation. A well-smoked man speaks and writes English with a grace that can be acquired in no other way.

In what was said above I seem to have been directing criticism against the Oxford professors as such; but I have no intention of doing so. For the Oxford professor and his whole manner of being I have nothing but a profound respect. Here is indeed the greatest difference between the modern up-to-date American idea of a professor and the English type. Even with us in older days, in the bygone time when such people as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and William Cullen Bryant were professors, we had the English idea; a professor was supposed to be a venerable kind of person,

with snow-white whiskers reaching to his stomach. He was expected to moon around the campus, oblivious of the world around him. If you nodded to him he failed to see you. Of money he knew nothing; of business far less. He was, as his trustees were proud to say of him, "a child."

On the other hand, he contained within him a reservoir of learning of such depth as to be practically bottomless. None of this learning was supposed to be of any material or commercial benefit to anybody. Its use was in saving the soul and enlarging the mind.

At the head of such a group of professors was one whose beard was even whiter and longer, whose absence of mind was even still greater, and whose knowledge of money, business, and practical affairs was below zero. Him they made the president.

All this is changed in America. A university professor is now a busy, hustling person, approximating as closely to a business man as he can manage to do. It is on the business man that he models himself. He has a little place that he calls his 'office,' with a typewriter machine and stenographer. Here he sits and dictates letters, beginning after the best business models, "in re yours of the eighth ult., would say," etc., etc. He writes there letters to students, to his fellow-professors, to the president, indeed to any people who will let him write to them. The number of letters that he writes each month is duly counted and set to his credit. If he writes enough he will get a reputation as an 'executive' and big things may happen to him. He may even be asked to step out of the college and take a post as an 'executive' in a soap company or an advertising firm. The man, in short, is a 'hustler,' an 'advertiser' whose highest aim is to be a 'live wire.' If he is not he will presently

be dismissed, or, to use the business term, be 'let go,' by a board of trustees who are themselves hustlers and live wires. As to the professor's soul, he no longer needs to think of it, as it has been handed over, along with all the others, to a board of censors.

The American professor deals with his students according to his lights. It is his business to chase them along over a prescribed ground at a prescribed pace, like a flock of sheep. They all go humping together over the hurdles, with the professor chasing them with a set of 'tests' and 'recitations,' 'marks' and 'attendances,' the whole apparatus obviously copied from the time-clock of the business man's factory. This process is what is called 'showing results.' The pace set is necessarily that of the slowest, and this results in what I have heard Mr Edward Beatty describe as the "convoy system of education."

In my own opinion, reached after fifty-two years of profound reflection, this system contains in itself the seeds of destruction. It puts a premium on dullness and a penalty on genius. It circumscribes that attitude of mind which is the real spirit of learning. If we persist in it we shall presently find that true learning will fly away from our universities and will take rest wherever some individual and inquiring mind can mark out its path for itself.

Now the principal reason why I am led to admire Oxford is that the place is little touched as yet by the measuring of 'results,' and this passion for visible and provable 'efficiency.' The whole system at Oxford is such as to put a premium on genius and to let mediocrity and dullness go their way. On the dull student Oxford, after a proper lapse of time, confers a degree which means nothing more than that he lived and breathed at Oxford and kept out of jail. This for many students

is as much as society can expect. But for the gifted student Oxford offers great opportunities. There is no question of his hanging back till the last sheep has jumped over the fence. He need wait for no one. He may move forward as fast as he likes, following the bent of his genius. If he has in him any ability beyond that of the common herd, his tutor, interested in his studies, will smoke at him until he kindles him into a flame. For the tutor's soul is not harassed by herding dull students, with dismissal hanging by a thread over his head in the class-room. The American professor has no time to be interested in a clever student. He has time to be interested in his 'department,' his letter-writing, his executive work, and his organizing ability and his hope of promotion to a soap factory. But with that his mind is exhausted. The student of genius merely means to him a student who gives no trouble, who passes all his 'tests' and is present at all his 'recitations'; such a student also, if he can be trained to be a hustler and an advertiser, will undoubtedly 'make good.' But beyond that the professor does not think of him. The everlasting principle of equality has inserted itself in a place where it has no right to be and where irregularity is the breath of life.

American or Canadian college trustees would be horrified at the notion of professors who apparently do no work, give few or no lectures, and draw their pay merely for existing. Yet these are really the only kind of professors worth having; I mean men who can be trusted with a vague general mission in life, with a salary guaranteed at least till their death, and a sphere of duties entrusted solely to their own conscience and the promptings of their own desires. Such men are rare, but a single one of them when found is worth ten 'executives' and a dozen 'organizers.'

The excellence of Oxford, then, as I see it, lies in the peculiar vagueness of the organization of its work. It starts from the assumption that the professor is a really learned man whose sole interest lies in his own sphere ; and that a student, or at least the only student with whom the university cares to reckon seriously, is a young man who desires to know. This is an ancient medieval attitude long since buried in more up-to-date places under successive strata of compulsory education, State teaching, the democratization of knowledge, and the substitution of the shadow for the substance, and the casket for the gem. No doubt, in newer places the thing has got to be so. Higher education in America flourishes chiefly as a qualification for entrance into a money-making profession, and not as a thing in itself. But in Oxford one can still see the surviving outline of a nobler type and structure and a higher inspiration.

I do not mean to say, however, that my judgment of Oxford is one undiluted story of praise. In one respect, at least, I think that Oxford has fallen away from the high ideals of the Middle Ages. I refer to the fact that it admits women students to its studies. In the Middle Ages women were regarded with a peculiar chivalry long since lost. It was taken for granted that their brains were too delicately poised to allow them to learn anything. It was presumed that their minds were so exquisitely hung that intellectual effort might disturb them. The present age has gone to the other extreme ; and this is seen nowhere more than in the crowding of women into colleges originally designed for men. Oxford, I regret to find, has not stood out against this change.

To a profound scholar like myself the presence of these young women, many of them most attractive,

flittering up and down the streets of Oxford in their caps and gowns is very distressing.

Who is to blame for this and how they first got in I do not know. But I understand that they first of all built a private college of their own close to Oxford, and then edged themselves in foot by foot. If this is so, they only followed up the precedent of the recognized method in use in America. When an American college is established, the women go and build a college of their own overlooking the grounds. Then they put on becoming caps and gowns and stand and look over the fence at the college athletics. The male undergraduates, who were originally and by nature a hardy lot, were not easily disturbed. But inevitably some of the senior trustees fell in love with the first-year girls and became convinced that co-education was a noble cause. American statistics show that between 1880 and 1900 the number of trustees and senior professors who married girl undergraduates, or who wanted to do so, reached a percentage of—I forget the exact per cent. ; it was either a hundred or a little over.

I don't know just what happened at Oxford, but presumably something of the sort took place. In any case, the women are now all over the place. They attend the college lectures, they row in a boat, and they perambulate the High Street. They are even offering a serious competition against the men. Last year they carried off the ping-pong championship and took the Chancellor's prize for needlework, while in music, cooking, and millinery the men are said to be nowhere.

There is no doubt that unless Oxford puts the women out while there is yet time they will overrun the whole university. What this means to the progress of learning few can tell, and those who know are afraid to say.

Cambridge University, I am glad to see, still sets its

face sternly against this innovation. I am reluctant to count any superiority in the University of Cambridge. Having twice visited Oxford, having made the place a subject of profound study for many hours at a time, having twice addressed its undergraduates, and having stayed at the Mitre Hotel, I consider myself an Oxford man. But I must admit that Cambridge has chosen the wiser part.

Last autumn, while I was in London on my voyage of discovery, a vote was taken at Cambridge to see if the women, who have already a private college near by, should be admitted to the university. They were triumphantly shut out; and as a fit and proper sign of enthusiasm the undergraduates went over in a body and knocked down the gates of the women's college. I know that it is a terrible thing to say that anyone approved of this. All the London papers came out with headings that read, "Are our undergraduates turning into baboons?" and so on. The *Manchester Guardian* draped its pages in black, and even the *London Morning Post* was afraid to take bold ground in the matter. But I do know also that there was a great deal of secret chuckling and jubilation in the London clubs. Nothing was expressed openly. The men of England have been too terrorized by the women for that. But in safe corners of the club, out of earshot of waiters and away from casual strangers, little groups of elderly men chuckled quietly together. "Knocked down their gates, eh?" said the wicked old men to one another, and then whispered guiltily behind an uplifted hand: "Serve 'em right." Nobody dared to say anything outside. If he had, some one would have got up and asked a question in the House of Commons. When this is done all England falls flat upon its face.

But for my part, when I heard of the Cambridge vote

I felt as Lord Chatham did when he said in Parliament, "Sir, I rejoice that America has resisted." For I have long harboured views of my own upon the higher education of women. In these days, however, it requires no little hardihood to utter a single word of criticism against it.

So I return with relief to my general study of Oxford.

Viewing the situation as a whole, I am led, then, to the conclusion that there must be something in the life of Oxford itself that makes for higher learning. Smoked at by his tutor, fed in Henry VIII's kitchen, and sleeping in a tangle of ivy, the student evidently gets something not easily obtained in America. And the more I reflect on the matter, the more I am convinced that it is the sleeping in the ivy that does it. How different it is from student life as I remember it!

When I was a student at the University of Toronto thirty years ago, I lived, from start to finish, in seventeen different boarding-houses. As far as I am aware, these houses have not, or not yet, been marked with tablets. But they are still to be found in the vicinity of McCaul and Darcy and St Patrick Streets. Anyone who doubts the truth of what I have to say may go and look at them.

I was not alone in the nomadic life that I led. There were hundreds of us drifting about in this fashion from one melancholy habitation to another. We lived, as a rule, two or three in a house, sometimes alone. We dined in the basement. We always had beef, done up in some way after it was dead, and there were always soda biscuit on the table. They used to have a brand of soda biscuit in those days in the Toronto boarding-houses that I have not seen since. They were better than dog biscuit, but with not so much snap. My

contemporaries will all remember them. A great many of the leading barristers and professional men of Toronto fed on them.

In the life we led we had practically no opportunities for association on a large scale, no common-rooms, no reading-rooms—nothing. We never saw the magazines; personally, I didn't even know the names of them. The only interchange of ideas we ever got was by going over to the Caer Howell Hotel, on University Avenue, and interchanging them there.

I mention these melancholy details not for their own sake, but merely to emphasize the point that when I speak of students' dormitories and the larger life which they offer I speak of what I know. If we had had at Toronto, when I was a student, the kind of dormitories and dormitory life that they have at Oxford, I don't think I should ever have graduated. I'd have been there still. The trouble is that the universities on our continent are only just waking up to the idea of what a university should mean. They were, very largely, instituted and organized with the idea that a university was a place where young men were sent to absorb the contents of books and to listen to lectures in the classrooms. The student was pictured as a pallid creature, burning what was called the "midnight oil," his wan face bent over his desk. If you wanted to do something for him you gave him a book; if you wanted to do something really large on his behalf you gave him a whole basketful of them. If you wanted to go still farther and be a benefactor to the college at large, you endowed a competitive scholarship and set two or more pallid students working themselves to death to get it.

The real thing for the student is the life and environment that surround him. All that he really learns he

learns, in a sense, by the active operation of his own intellect and not as the passive recipient of lectures. And for this active operation what he really needs most is the continued and intimate contact with his fellows. Students must live together and eat together, talk and smoke together. Experience shows that that is how their minds really grow. And they must live together in a rational and comfortable way. They must eat in a big dining-room or hall, with oak beams across the ceiling, and stained glass in the windows, and with a shield or tablet here or there upon the wall to remind them between times of the men who went before them and left a name worthy of the memory of the college. If a student is to get from the college what it ought to give him, a college dormitory with the life in common that it brings is his absolute right. A university that fails to give it to him is cheating him.

If I were founding a university—and I say it with all the seriousness of which I am capable—I would found first a smoking-room; then when I had a little more money in hand I would found a dormitory; then after that, or more probably with it, a decent reading-room and a library. After that, if I still had more money that I couldn't use, I would hire a professor and get some text-books.

This article has sounded for the most part like a continuous eulogy of Oxford, with but little in favour of our American colleges. I turn, therefore, with pleasure to the more congenial task of showing what is wrong with Oxford and with the English university system generally, and the aspect in which our American universities far excel the British.

The point is that Henry VIII is dead. The English are so proud of what Henry VIII and the benefactors of earlier centuries did for the universities that they

forget the present. There is little or nothing in the English to compare with the magnificent generosity of individuals, provinces, and states which is building up the colleges of the United States and Canada. There used to be. But by some strange confusion of thought, the English people admire the noble gifts of Cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII and Queen Margaret, and do not realize that the Carnegies and Rockefellers and the William Macdonalds are the Cardinal Wolseys of to-day. The University of Chicago was founded upon oil. McGill University rests largely on a basis of tobacco. In America the world of commerce and business levies on itself a noble tribute in favour of the higher learning. In England, with a few conspicuous exceptions, such as that at Bristol, there is little of the sort. The feudal families are content with what their remote ancestors have done; they do not try to emulate it in any great degree.

In the long run this must count. Of all the various reforms that are talked of at Oxford, and of all the imitations of American methods that are suggested, the only one worth while, to my thinking, is to capture a few millionaires, give them honorary degrees at a million pounds sterling apiece, and tell them to imagine that they are Henry VIII. I give Oxford warning that if this is not done the place will not last another two centuries.

From " My Discovery of England "

THE GREAT WHITE LIGHT

D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS

A GREAT wind from the sea is shouting over the Down, driving the little clouds like little boats across the blue. The lush meadows are knee-deep in buttercups, marshmallows—or is that not a kind of sweet? Possibly I am thinking of vegetable marrows—loosestrife, periwinkle, Old Dog's Nose, bungweed, and scores of other country flowers whose names I do not know and cannot be bothered (unlike so many Georgian poets) to invent. A group of cows, one of whom so closely resembles in feature and expression a Member of Parliament of my acquaintance that I find myself instinctively raising my hat as I pass, lies munching in the sun. On the duckpond four ducks, with their expression of sincere but slightly bone-headed rectitude, are cruising aimlessly in the bright green scum. There is a pleasant hum of bees in the air, steadily gathering honey for my tea. On the upland slope a ploughman urges his team with rural oaths.

All nature, one might say, is one vast placid smile. It is difficult for me to contemplate the scene and realize that I have at last taken a step which is so momentous, so far-reaching in its infinite reactions, that I can hardly yet believe that the struggle is over and the Rubicon crossed.

Many other thinkers besides myself have retired into the bosom of Nature to commune with their own spirits or to make some tremendous resolution. Some (like Wordsworth) have devoted themselves to the produc-

tion of improving verse about flowers, birds, clouds, idiot boys, aged men, and other rural sights. Some (like Thoreau. My hat ! What a bore ! What a bore !) have become philosophers. Some, in a frenzy of inspiration, have meditated amendments to the Factory Acts. Some have written exquisite lyrics, entrancing essays, tremendous epics. Some have tremblingly consecrated their lives to the composition of advertisements for tinned salmon and water-tube boilers. Some have made a compact with their soul to float a rubber company, edit a life of Cobden, patent an improved hat-guard, hang themselves for love, read the poetry of Mr —, and breed prize hens. Such crises, such upheavals of the soul, are best faced out in silence and solitude, and, indeed, are in the best kind of men inspired only by Nature.

For myself, though I had long meditated the step, it was only yesterday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, that I finally decided to become a Bimetallist. It was, indeed, no sudden step. There are old families which may be said to have Bimetallism in their very blood ; and though no ancestor of mine actually laid down his life for his adherence to the Quantitative Theory of money, it is rather a boast with us that whereas other people keep bowls of goldfish exclusively, we have from time immemorial mixed ours with silverfish. One of my earliest recollections, too, is that of visiting a gracious old lady of Bimetallist traditions and observing in a glass case the pen with which one of her kinsmen wrote to the *Statist* in 1889 pointing out that during the five years ended with 1880 the exports of gold from America exceeded the imports by less than 17½ million dollars, or about 3½ million sterling. For this he had to fly the country. I shall never forget the tear in the old lady's eye and the proud tremor in her voice as she

recited the story. "Wha' fears to speak o' '89?" she said with her head held high; a difficult thing to say correctly with the head in any position. Nourished, therefore, in an atmosphere of Bimetallism, as other children are in Royalism, Jacobitism, and Vegetarianism, I grew up sympathetically inclined. And now that the final step has been taken I am ready to meet what may befall me with a high heart and a cool head.

It will be no easy task. Bimetallists, I think, are generally ostracized by Society and the mob alike. Henceforth very often a beautiful young girl, observing me in some drawing-room, will say, "Mother, who is that fine-looking, rather sad man over there? By his lofty brow and his pale but distinguished features he must be some great thinker. Is it Mr Wells, Mother? I should like to meet him." And her mother, hastily catching the girl to her side, will say hurriedly, "Hush, dear. That is a Bimetallist. They are said to devour children whole," and will take the girl away at once.

Good women are said to avert their eyes and draw back their skirts on passing a Bimetallist. Dogs bite Bimetallists even more freely than members of the Decimal Association. In some countries a Bimetallist cannot be a feoffee, nor be seised in double burgage, nor enjoy and have to his use any freehold, messuage, easement, heriot, or other benefit (such, *e.g.*, as an elephant, or a wool mat) whatsoever. In Denmark any free man perceiving a Bimetallist on his land may secure and bind him, and after boring him through both ears set him to draw the plough. In South Slavia and in some parts of Transylvania Bimetallists are forced to travel on all fours and may be hunted at any time of the year. In England they are rarely allowed to attain any rank higher than that of baronet. In Portugal they are often chained through the nose and

forced to perform in the street. What is there, then, in the nature of Bimetallism which sustains and nerves its followers to withstand the almost universal vituperation, hatred, and violence with which they are surrounded everywhere?

In order to answer this question we must first ask ourselves, "What is Bimetallism, and what does it stand for?" The answer is simple. Bimetallism, in a word, means——

Bimetallism stands for——

The simple significance of Bimetall——

It is perfectly obvious that Bim——

I beg your pardon. What Bimetallism really amounts to is this, that the Treasury——

Perhaps it will be easier for you if I begin by saying that if the reserve of gold is, roughly, $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the call-over, and a carry over of 16 millions in legal tender, how does France? And, given a bullion value of 200 millions, should Greece or (conversely) Spain? But, on the other hand, is (or are) the United States to follow the same example? Surely not! For in that case where would Portugal step in? Whereas Turkey (as is obvious from what I have just written) could have no possible interest in doing so, and indeed would reject such a hypothesis as economically untenable and sociologically unsound, particularly as Germany's reserve, *pro tanto*, would have fallen.

But mere words, after all, can hardly express a state of ecstasy, a settled and assured conviction, a high and secure exaltation of mind and spirit. It is sufficient to say that for Bimetallism I am prepared to——

Excuse me one moment. I find there is a small correction to make. It appears from Appendix D in Lloyd on Bimetallism (which I was reading when the great white light broke in on me, and which I have just

picked up in order to refresh myself anew) that Bimetal-
lism is all wrong and that the whole book is in fact an
argument against it. Will you therefore, please, go
carefully through this and substitute the word 'Mono-
metallism' for 'Bimetallism' wherever it occurs?
Thank you. Thank you very much. That will be
all.

From "At the Sign of the Blue Moon"

THE DOUBLE

E. V. LUCAS

THERE must be few minor agonies more disturbing than the presence of a constant suspicion which no amount of investigation can ever confirm or disperse.

And when a matter of eighty Fishers is concerned, why, then . . .

On the assumption that every one now bets on horses, I have latterly opened all casual conversations in street and tram, office and bus, lift and cloakroom with the remark, "I hope you backed So-and-so?"—or whatever outsider it was that had most recently upset all the form and the prophets and won at long odds—and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the answer indicated that, although that most desirable proceeding was not indulged in, money had been invested on one or more runners.

The honour of being the hundredth man fell to the old waiter at a certain chop-house.

No, he said, he hadn't backed So-and-so or anyone else. Because he didn't hold with betting. A mug's game. He'd never had but one bet, and that was enough for him. Too much, in fact, for it had poisoned his life.

"Poisoned?" I repeated.

"Yes," he said, "poisoned. It was like this: I never took any interest in racing, except now and then to be barged into and very nearly knocked down and most likely killed by newspaper boys rushing about with the winner of the three-thirty, till one day a

customer here—a nice, affable gent too—when the time came to pay hadn't a brown left for me, so he said, 'I can't give you any money, Robert, but I'll give you a tip of a better kind. To-morrow there's a double that's a cert—Pneumonia and Knightsbridge.' You know what a double is? Both horses have to win or you don't get anything; but if both win you get a packet.

"As I knew nothing about racing I went to a pal who was going to the races and handed him a sovereign, for, 'If I am going to gamble,' I said, 'I'll do it proper. Put that on Pneumonia and Knightsbridge for the double,' I said. 'Right-o,' he said. 'Don't forget,' I said. 'Not 'arf,' he said, and then I went home to bed.

"But I couldn't sleep for thinking about those two horses. And all next day I was like a maniac. Every time I heard a paper boy my heart turned right over. At lunch I got all the orders wrong. I served mulligatawny instead of custard, and if I broke one plate I broke twenty. My hand was like a shuttle. And then at last I got a paper with the first of my races in it, and found that Pneumonia had won at 10 to 1. I could hardly stand up.

"Half the double had come home, and all I had to do now was to win the other half and then I'd be a millionaire—a Solly Joel and Harry Lauder rolled into one—for that's what all that money would mean to me.

"Well, my second race wasn't till late, and how I got through that afternoon I don't know. And then when I had bought a paper I didn't dare to look at it. It cost me eighteenpence for brandy before I could bring my eyes to the print, and there, sure enough, Knightsbridge had won too, at 8 to 1. Just think of it, 10 to 1 and 8 to 1—that was eighty-eight pounds to

me, because they add the first quid on. No one knows how I felt. I was just like a baby—I laughed and cried both together. I thought of all the things I'd buy. I was mad with joy."

He stopped and gulped.

"And then in walks my pal and hands me a sovereign. 'I'm really very sorry,' says he, 'but I quite forgot to put it on for you.'

"Well, I hope I'll never have another shock like that. In fact, I couldn't stand another. Another would do me in.

" 'You forgot it?' I said, when I came to. 'Yes,' he said, 'I'm very sorry. I forgot it.'

"And to this day I don't know whether he did or not. That's what I meant by poisoning life. Whenever I meet him I look him in the eye and wonder and wonder. 'Did you have eighty of the best off me, or didn't you?' I says to myself, staring at him X-ray like. But I shall never know. Is he my friend, or is he a wrong 'un? I shall never know. Isn't that poisoning life?"

From "Urbanities"

A PAIR OF NUTCRACKERS

A. NEIL LYONS

✓

WHEN I walked in the High Street of Blowfield—which is a town in Arcady—at luncheon-time on a recent Thursday, the only creature visible along the whole expanse of that engaging thoroughfare was an old, old man. He stood upon a doorstep, beneath some dependent garlands of fruit (in cans), and the sign of “Booker’s Universal Emporium.” He wore a willow-patterned waistcoat.

“Booker’s, at Blowfield.” Who has not heard of this far-famed establishment? Its name is a household word in this and many other parishes, and it is a well-known fact that Booker’s sheep-dip, and Booker’s weed-killer, not to mention Booker’s tinned fruits, is, and are, the best and cheapest which our civilization can afford.

I had no sooner perceived the honoured sign of “Booker” than I recollected my need of a small article which Booker’s could supply, and which my housekeeper had earnestly counselled me not to be deluded into buying elsewhere than at Booker’s.

So I climbed the steps and dodged the garlands and walked right into Booker’s, the willow-patterned waistcoat following me.

My venerable friend, the sole visible representative of Booker’s garrison, blinked at me apprehensively as he stroked his waistcoat.

“Good morning,” I said. “Kindly show me some nutcrackers.”

"Some what?" demanded Messrs Booker's representative, bestowing more blinks upon me.

"Some nutcrackers," I repeated.

"What be they?" inquired the shy old gentleman.

"Nutcrackers? Why, *nutcrackers*," I explained.

"That's a funny set-out," observed the waistcoat.

"Be they used, then, for to crack up nuts, like?"

"Just for that purpose," I assented warmly.

"Dear me! Go' bless my soul!" exclaimed the excellent old fellow. "To save a person's teeth—hey? Well I never! What *will* they bring out next—hey?" He blinked at me with redoubled energy.

I shook my head in a gloomy manner expressive of my inability to satisfy the willow-pattern's pious wonder. "In the meantime," I suggested, "let me persuade you to exhibit some nutcrackers."

"Nutcrackers—hey?" repeated the patriarch, amid a shower of blinks. "Now, sir, can you tell me, I wonder, wheer sich manner o' tackle would be housed? In this department—hey?"

I ventured to suppose that nutcrackers would be kept in some place not inhabited by sheep-dip.

"You see, sir," explained this honourable member of Booker's executive. "I be here merely tempor'y: mindin' shop, as the sayun goo, while all the rest on 'em be gone to dinner. I be a packer, really, if you was to ask my proper qualification."

I was conscious of no curiosity concerning the patriarch's qualifications. All I wanted was a pair of inexpensive nutcrackers. I reminded him of that fact.

"Very well," responded the old gentleman, with perfect good-humour and five-and-twenty blinks. "Let us goo seek them—hey?"

He conducted me, with these words, into another and even more lofty department, filled to the lid with

lace curtains, ladies' items, muslins, mattresses, and mail-carts. "This," he announced, "is the Household, Haberdashery—and General. Will they be yere, sir?"

"Decidedly not," I said.

We retired into the Artistic—and General; an imposing treasury of alarm-clocks, all-wire bed-springs, bamboo tables, and overmantels—carved and executed after the attractive manner of Messrs Salmon and Gluckstein.

"Not here," I gasped.

The Grand Old Blinker, with a sudden quickening of interest, then led me into a mixed assembly of hams, dried onions, Canadian butter, Brazil nuts, biscuits, and—bottled beer. "What about this place?" he wondered hopefully.

"What is this place?" I answered.

"This," he said, with a blink of great feeling and unmistakable signs of the water-brash, "is the—hey—the—hey—Horf Licence—and General."

I tore him away from it with sympathetic reluctance. It is bootless to repeat the further details of our lengthy search for nutcrackers. Suffice it to say that at last we found them.

We found them in the sanctuary of the G.O.B.'s last hopes: in his Land of Promise—the Assorted—and General. Here, amid shaving-glasses, more alarm-clocks, more onions, air-guns, soothing-syrup, and glue, they reposed, in a glass cabinet upon the peak or apex of a pyramid of dog-soap.

Perhaps you suppose that my adventures at Booker's now terminate? If you suppose a thing like that it is evident that you have never shopped in Arcady.

"Dear me! Go' bless my soul!" exclaimed the G.O.B., his willow-pattern wobbling with emotion,

when I called his attention to the cabinet. "So *they* be nutcrackers! They've took the rust a bit powerful, ain't they?"

"They have," I assented. "Hardly fit for civilized employment, but—still, what is the price of them? Fourpence?"

"Not *more* than fourpence, surely!" replied the trusted salesman.

"Well, then," I responded, "let us say threepence. Here you are."

The G.O.B. drew back, blinking rapidly. "I dursn't sell they things without we know the price for sartin," he exclaimed. "You see," he added, leaning confidentially across the dog-soap and favouring me with a jocose variety of blink, "there's too many eyes about the place. Booker's is a very strictly managed consarn."

"Can't you find out the price?" I said.

"They be all at dinner," replied the G.O.B.

"Don't you keep a price-list?" I suggested.

"We got a bewk," replied the G.O.B. "Shall I goo and fetch it?"

Upon my assenting to this proposition, the G.O.B. departed, and after much travail in a distant part of Booker's territory he returned with two stout volumes. One, which was bound in red, bore the inscription, "B.K. and K., Coventry"; the other, beautifully upholstered in purple, supported the armorial bearing and insignia of "T. and Co., Sheffield."

I have looked at books like these before, and I knew the rules. "There is 20 per cent. to come off these prices, as listed," I explained to the G.O.B.

"Well, I never! Be there, indeed! Go' bless my soul!" replied the stout financier.

He wetted both thumbs and began to turn over the pages of "B.K. and K." "They got it printed under

'Nuts,' sir," he said, at last, "but 'tis on'y be the gross. Look there!"

Looking there, I learned that nuts with washers, assorted, per gross, were offered at the revolutionary price of 12s. 3d. I exhorted my guide and comforter to try again.

He accordingly side-tracked "B.K. and K.," and consulted their rivals with surprisingly quick results.

"*Here* we be!" he called triumphantly, "here we be for sartin—nutcracks, in cases, three-pund-ten and fower guineas. Which there is two plain pictures of the very object!"

There they were, quite definitely—the "nut-cracks," so called and so spelled, in dozens, reclining upon beds of plush in cases of leather. Some were ebon-handled; some had handles wrought of ivory; some were "finished in fine Sheffield plate." I looked upon them longingly. But——

But I did not want a dozen nutcracks. I wanted just a single pair.

"Naarthun ain't printed yere about no single cracks," protested the G.O.B.

"What is to be done, then?" I demanded.

"Theer be'ant naarthun to be done—only wait," rejoined the G.O.B. "They be all at dinner."

Wait! And why not? I had already waited, as my watch informed me, for at least three-quarters of an hour. A further sojourn in that place of solitude and calm could only bring happiness to a man of philosophic temperament. Casting away all worldly thoughts, all selfish appetite for air, wine, and food, I gave myself up to the simple pleasures of the moment and exercised, in the interests of the G.O.B., my choicest gifts of raillery and harmless mirth.

Under this treatment the G.O.B. expanded wonder-

fully. He revived for my delectation many of the choicest *mots* of the packing-shed, and his honest laughter rang among the rafters, evaporated among the hip-baths, and was echoed by the onions. Suddenly, however, a deadly calm ensued.

The G.O.B., pausing at the crucial stage of an anecdote concerning linseed, assumed an expression of awful gravity, and, walking backwards, made an obeisance before the figure of a newcomer—a young man, lanky, sombre, and solemn, dressed in sombre, solemn clothes.

“Yere be the gentleman as belongs yere,” proclaimed the G.O.B., with a break in his blink, as he vanished from sight.

The gentleman, looking down upon me with a sombre eye, demanded to know “what article he could have the hodour of subbitting.”

I answered, simply, “Nutcrackers.”

The sombre young gentleman, directing me, with a flourish to the glass-topped case, said, “Nidepeds-ha’peddy!”

“Does that include the rust?” I ventured to inquire.

“Nidepeds-ha’peddy!” repeated the young gentleman.

“Haven’t you got a *clean* pair?” I persisted.

“These,” said the young gentleman stiffly, “are the odly style id dutcracks which we stock.”

“Won’t you,” I pleaded, “knock off the ha’penny?”

“Sir,” replied the young gentleman, “if you require a *cheap* lide in dutcracks, you will have to go elsewhere. Booker’s Sell Only The Best.”

From “A Market Bundle”

FAIR DIVISION

BARRY PAIN

APPLES are good, though not too plentiful, this year. But the apple has not, like the orange, been arranged by Nature in sections convenient for division; and in consequence of this trouble occasionally arises.

The five ragged children stepped on to the dusty grass in the park and sat down. They had rather a difficult matter to settle, and there was a serious look, as well as dirt, on their faces. Jane, an old child of twelve, was the managing director of the company. The others were Albert, Jane's brother, a youth of activity and resource; Eva Atkins, who had to do what Jane said; Willie, Eva's brother, a pessimist who had lived for ten years and seen the futility of it; and lastly, something that was called Baby and was always being fetched back.

The problem before them may be stated thus—one largish apple, five children, and no knife.

"Tell you what," said Albert, "we might each have a bite in turn."

"Not much," said Willie bitterly. "Not with a mouth like yours."

"Yes," said Jane. "But Elbut needn't bite as much as he could."

"Wouldn't have to need. He'd do it. I know him."

An elderly gentleman sat on a penny chair under a chestnut-tree at a little distance. Jane's quick eye

fell upon him, and she discerned that here was an alternative course.

"I've got it," she said. "See that old fathead sitting there? I'll go and borrow his knife."

"Better still—ask him to cut it up for us," said Willie. "Then we may get it done fair, as he ain't going to have none of it hisself."

The suggestion was felt to be sound, and was generally approved.

"I'll go and ask him," said Jane. "You all stop here. Eeverratkins, if Baby tries to play with them ducks, you call me, and I'll give him something."

As Jane approached the elderly gentleman her plain face assumed an expression intended to indicate great respect and deep-seated piety. Her voice became ostentatiously refined.

"Please, sir," she said, "have you got a knife, sir, and would you cut up this apple into five equal halves, sir, and make one of them smaller than the others because it ain't good for Baby? And could you please tell us the right time, sir?"

There is no sorrow like the sorrow of partial success. She rejoined the group with a depressed air and the uncut apple still in her hands.

"Well?" said Albert eagerly.

"The silly old fool ain't got no knife, and says it's half-past three."

"Knew he wouldn't have none," said Willie.

And then there came across the grass a small boy who already had some of the qualities of a great financier. Albert was personally acquainted with him and called him up.

"Ike," said Albert, "lend us that knife what you done Jimmy Parker out of."

"What for?"

"To cut up this apple."

"I never lends my knife, but I'll cut it up for you. How many bits?"

"Five."

"You can't cut an apple into five, because that's an odd number. You can cut it into six. That makes a bit over for me doing of it for you."

The managing director hesitated. "All right," she said. "We got to get it done somehow. But do it fair, and if there's one bit bigger than the rest you ain't to have it."

"Shouldn't want to take it," said Ike meekly. He proceeded with the work, watched by anxious eyes. "There you are," he said, when he had finished. "And that's yours," he added chivalrously, handing the largest piece to Jane. It happened to contain the whole of the core.

Jane took it without comment, feeling that she had brought it on herself; besides, a girl of determination can eat core. Ike hastily put the most desirable of the remaining portions into his mouth, observing, "That's mine." And then Jane took command again and completed the distribution. It gave no sort of satisfaction.

"My bit's about as big as a fly," said Willie, "and on my birthday, too."

"What we ought to done," said Albert, "was to have tossed for it. If I'd got it I should have give some of it away."

"Likely," said Willie sardonically.

"We never ought to have let Ike into it," said Jane, who could see and admit a mistake. "And we never ought to have give Baby none. He'd have been just as happy with a drink of water, and better for him."

Presently Eva Atkins, returning from a baby-hunt

with her prey under her right arm, noted the absence of Jane and inquired where she was.

"Old Whiskers called her," Albert explained. "Don't know what for."

"Interfering of some sort," said Willie.

Jane, with her very best manner on, was talking to the elderly gentleman under the tree. His fingers went into his ticket-pocket, and something was dropped into Jane's outstretched paw. There was intense excitement in the group of children. Jane sprinted back to them—radiant, exultant.

"The old blighter's give us threepence to buy apples with. 'Struth, he has. I got it in my hand. Come on, quick, all of you."

Even Willie smiled. "We done him proper," he said.

The young financier with Jimmy Parker's knife in his pocket had watched the proceedings, and he did not miss a chance. He came running up.

"I say," he said, "if you should happen to want my knife again for—well, for cutting anythink——"

"No, thank you," said Jane, with great dignity. "We don't want your knife, nor we don't want you neither."

"Oh, all right, then. I've got more money nor what you have, and I had three apples all to myself before I come out."

But he was talking to a girl who would one day be a woman, and already insisted upon the last word.

"Liar," said Jane.

From "One Kind and Another"

OF LIMERICKS

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

March 17th.

I THOUGHT that I had finally done with Briggs, yet, strange to say, he has come into my diary again, owing to a most peculiar affair between him and my own chum, Weston. Weston I found had got a curious idea that the poems called limericks were not so wonderful as they seemed. He believed that anybody could make them up if he only gave his mind to it. He is a very dogged chap, and as there was nothing much doing in his own branch of science, he decided, though without telling me, that he would make a limerick—just to show Briggs he wasn't a *rara avis*, as they say. And he did make one. It took him a fortnight, and kept him awake a good deal at night; but he made it, and I could see there was a great weight off his mind when he had.

The next thing was to show it to me, and I admitted frankly that he had certainly made a limerick, though somehow, with all the wish to like it, I felt there was something a little out of order with it. I asked him if he thought so, and he said not at all. In fact, it seemed to him to be as good as any that Briggs had made.

He said :

“ If he's honest he'll admit it. But whether he does or not I know it's good.”

So now, before I put down what strange things happened when we showed this work to Briggs, I will write the limerick of Weston from his own finished copy.

These were the exact words :

There was a young fellow of Hong-Kong,
Who always did everything wrong.
So off he went to Spain
And there he tried hard again;
But still he did everything wrong.

We took it to Briggs during a preparation, after Fitz had been called away and left us on our honour to go on with our work. He read it and smiled, and handed it back to Weston. He said :

“ My dear chap, you stick to your beetles and mice and vermin and science. It’s right bang off—footle isn’t the word.”

At the first glance this, of course, looked like jealousy, but it wasn’t. I don’t believe Briggs was ever jealous of anybody.

“ You may say it’s footle,” answered Weston. “ But what’s the matter with it ? ”

“ Do you really want to know ? ” inquired Briggs, with rather a pitying expression.

“ Yes, I do,” answered Weston.

“ Then I’ll tell you,” replied Briggs. “ With a limerick of any class you want three things. First it must be true to the rules of poetry and dead right in its shape and melody and so on ; and secondly it must have a great surprise in it ; and thirdly it must be funny. Well, there you are. Take this affair of yours. It’s horrid from the technical point of view, and it’s not got a ray of fun in it, and the only surprise about it is that you made it.”

“ What’s wrong with it, then ? ” I asked breathlessly.

“ Everything,” said Briggs.

Then Weston spoke.

“ I think it’s very funny indeed,” he said. “ I took

a fortnight making it and I often laughed when I was doing it."

"As a matter of fact," Briggs told us, "very few poets, except the greatest, have any sense of humour at all. Modern poets are as solemn as owls. Even Masefield, the best of them, never laughs."

"Perhaps he doesn't see anything to laugh at," I said.

"Then he ought to," answered Briggs. "If Shakespeare could see such a lot to laugh at in people, then there is a lot to laugh at; and if you miss it, then you're not absolutely tip-top. Now to show you, Weston, that I'm not talking through my hat about your limerick, I'll write one here this minute, and explain to you, as I go on, why mine will be so jolly different from yours. We'll take Hong-Kong as you did. There's nothing the matter with Hong-Kong."

"It's got to be perfect poetry, and funny, and have a great surprise in it," Weston reminded him rather suspiciously.

"So it has," said Briggs. "Now let's see."

He thought for about fifty seconds or so, then the first line came to him and he repeated it.

It went as follows:

"A verger who dwelt in Hong-Kong."

"Why a verger?" asked Weston.

"For the surprise," explained Briggs. "If there is one person in the world you wouldn't expect to find dwelling in Hong-Kong it would be a verger."

"There's nothing funny about a verger," argued Weston; but Briggs said there would be something funny about this verger before he'd done with him. And the next line proved it.

"Given the verger," he said, "he's got to do most unverger-like things."

He thought and then invented this beautiful line :

"Played a marvellous game of ping-pong."

I laughed instantly, but Weston was still cautious and only smiled slightly.

"Now," went on Briggs, "we've got to pile up the doings of the verger, and each thing he does must be madder than the last and less verger-like."

Weston and I tried to think of something no common verger would do, but we couldn't. However, Briggs did without an effort.

"The next rhyming lines run as follows," he said :

"He cheated at cards,
Tamed tigers and pards,

"How's that?"

Of course in honesty we had to say they were magnificent.

"Nothing in themselves," explained Briggs, "but funny in connection with a simple soul like a verger."

We saw this; then, strange to say, I thought of a final line.

"How would this do for the end, Briggs?" I asked.
"It's just flashed into my mind."

Then I gave this line :

"And sang a good topical song."

Weston applauded and said it was the best line of the lot; but Briggs shook his head.

"No, Medland, that's what we call an anti-climax. It lets the whole show down. A verger *might* sing a good topical song. It wouldn't surprise you to know that such a man did. It's tame—too realistic. We

want to keep the limerick on its mad career to the finish."

We thought ; but Weston and myself had hardly begun to think of the necessary rhyme, which, of course, was the first thing, when Briggs produced a perfectly insane line and yet just what the poem wanted, according to him.

It was this :

"And grew a beard thirty feet long."

Then if you join it all up, as Briggs now did on the blank sheet at the end of my *Geometry*, you get the perfect thing.

We said it was ripping, but he seemed to regard it as all in the day's work. Anyway, he made the way to write limericks quite clear to us ; but unfortunately it doesn't follow because you have learned how to do a thing that you can do it. At the bottom of his heart I know Weston always liked his own best. Anyway, he sent it to his grandmother, and he didn't send Briggs'.

From "A Human Boy's Diary"

THE PHILANTHROPIST

W. PETT RIDGE

✓

THE young man at the *Dispatch* office was responsible for what may be termed the kick-off. In looking back, the town discovered that the whole incident had some resemblance to the football which took place on Saturday afternoon; the bustle, the excitement, and even the examples of rough play were similar.

"My name," said the visitor timidly, when he had gained admission to the editor's room, "is Neville."

"On the Grampian hills," suggested the youth, "your father feeds his flocks, a frugal swain whose constant care——"

"Australia, to be exact," said the caller. "Perth, to be more precise. I am a native of this town, and consequently I feel I owe something to it. You, perhaps, may be able to indicate what that something should be."

"My dear sir," cried the *Dispatch* young man, jumping up, "pray take a chair. Take the settee. Have a cigarette? Help yourself to a match. My name's Gainsford. Now, then!" With a great air of shrewdness. "Let us get all this clear. What, speaking roughly, is the limit to which you are willing to go?"

"Can't go beyond five thousand."

"Pounds?"

"Pounds, of course."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

The young man sat again at the table and began to

take notes. He put questions, and these were answered readily and modestly. Fortune had been good to Mr Neville; he made money in wool at a period when others failed. Twenty-two years he had been absent from England. Landing at Plymouth the day before, he, without going to London, as most of the passengers had done, travelled direct to his birthplace.

"And," said young Gainsford, writing swiftly, "you detect a number of changes. You are astonished at the progress that has been made, and you consider it speaks well for the whole-heartedness and the public spirit ever shown by leading men of our town."

"Haven't had much time to glance around yet."

"To you," still taking it down from his own dictation, "it seems almost like a dream to be reviewing the scene——" Here he turned, and consulted the index of a volume called *Familiar Quotations*. "'Review the scene. And summon from the shadowy past, the forms that once have been.'"

"That's one way of putting it," admitted Mr Neville.

"In treading the familiar streets you can imagine yourself a boy again."

"Wouldn't say that," corrected the visitor. "I'm on the wrong side of forty."

"Mr Neville," said the *Dispatch* youth, as he wrote, "is in the prime of life, and attributes his good health to moderation in food and beverage, and to those industrious habits which were fostered in early years. It may be added that during the long period, and in spite of the wide distance separating him from those early years, he has never for a moment forgotten old acquaintances. Not a day has passed but he has sent a silent message to friends at home. We have now to make known the intentions of Mr Neville. He has

chosen the *Dispatch* to be his intermediary, and we have the gratification to state that he proposes——”

“That’s where you find the signals against you, lad,” said Mr Neville. “So far, it’s all easy enough. The trouble begins here.”

Gainsford crossed knees and stared at the windows reflectively.

“Art gallery,” he said, with deference.

“Guess again!”

“Addition to cottage hospital.”

“Go on trying.”

“Drinking fountain with sculptured figures,” said the youth. His powers of thought seemed to be giving out.

“Bah!” ejaculated Mr Neville.

“Annuities for old——”

“Look here,” interrupted the other. He hit the table with his walking-stick. “I don’t pretend that my notion is to hide my light under a bushel. I know as well as you do that if I want publicity there must be what you may call a touch of the eccentric in the plan. Something that’ll catch the eye, the ear, the ’ead, and the ’eart.”

There was silence for a few moments. Then young Gainsford raised his voice with the air of one suddenly inspired.

“Twenty pounds a year,” he announced, “to ten spinster ladies, born in the town, who, having reached the age of thirty-five, are in but moderate circumstances.”

“Could you make it widows?” asked Mr Neville. “And of good appearance? I’m a bachelor myself, and I’ve always had a sympathy——”

“Make it widows,” said the other handsomely. “And of good appearance.” Mr Neville took off his

right glove, and there was the fervent gripping of hands which indicates complete and emphatic agreement. The notes, finished, were handed to the master printer to be set up.

They lunched at the Queen's Head, where a market ordinary was being held, and a flagon of Australian wine was ordered; at the first glass young Gainsford asked to be allowed to state that he was not, as might have been assumed, the proprietor and editor of the journal, but just a sub placed in charge in the temporary absence of the editor and proprietor. Demanding confidence for confidence, he begged that Mr Neville would tell him if the offer might be regarded as genuine, and, on this, documents were submitted which removed all suspicions; moreover, Mr Neville was able to identify several of the men in the room, and one, coming over presently, recognized him. The grip of the hand that accompanied this induced Mr Neville to turn to his journalist friend for help, and Gainsford explained that poor old Neville had been through rotten hard times, and could now be described, colloquially, as down and out. On this, the third party lost much of his enthusiasm, and saying casually, "Better days in store, perhaps," went back to his meal. The two, left alone, were in accord in deciding that, until the publication of the weekly issue of the newspaper, the whole matter had to be kept as a profound secret.

"I don't want a fuss," pleaded Mr Neville. "Prematurely, that is to say. And these chaps here never used to think much of me, and I never thought too highly of them."

"Your interest, sir, is in the fair sex?"

"To a certain extent."

"May I ask how long you intend to remain with us?"

"I catch," he answered, "the last up train to London this evening."

The head-waiter approached with the extended arms of one about to give an effusive greeting. "Take me away," urged Mr Neville to his companion, "and hide me."

He was escorted to the house on the outskirts of the town where a bed-sitting-room had, on the instructions of the master printer, been rented for Gainsford a week earlier. Leaving him in charge of the excellent landlady, the youth prepared to hurry back to the office to resume control there. "Mrs Hedderwick," he said, "give us tea for two at five o'clock sharp." The landlady beamed expansively. "My friend won't mind being left alone until then." Mrs Hedderwick said the gentleman had only to ring if anything was wanted.

Gainsford had not reached the main road ere the landlady, with suitable apologies, begged Mr Neville to accompany her to the garden, and oblige her with an opinion on the hollyhocks growing there. A presentable woman, her manner was so ingratiating that the visitor from Australia complied after but a moment's hesitation, and five minutes later the two were in the summer-house, and Mrs Hedderwick was giving an animated description of the last hours of her late husband. It seemed natural that in the course of this she should give way to tears, and it would have been strange if Mr Neville had omitted to comfort her by gentle pats on the plump shoulder.

"Marry again," she quoted pathetically. "Them were almost his last words. 'Marry again,' he says, 'soon as ever you like!'"

"And did you?"

"I've never," declared Mrs Hedderwick, "plucked

up the heart to so much as look at any other man. Until now," she added coyly.

"Don't let me keep you from your 'ouse-work."

"It's all done and finished hours ago," she explained brightly. "I'm out and about before my neighbours have begun to open their eyes, and I set to it, and everything's all spick and span before midday." She went on inconsequently. "Hedderwick used to say I was made to live in one of the colonies."

"I shall be going back to Australia in the course of a few weeks."

"Wouldn't I love to be going back with you!" She put her hand over her mouth in a girlish way, as though to restrain further speech of an unconsidered nature. An imitation of a postman's knock came from the distant front door, and Mrs Hedderwick took the opportunity to absent herself.

She returned bearing two unstamped letters addressed to — Neville, Esq., and tidied the furniture of the summer-house to give him an opportunity of reading the contents. He did not speak, and the moment came when she was no longer able to suppress curiosity.

"People have soon found out where you are," she remarked.

"Can't understand how."

"There isn't much goes on in this town that doesn't get known pretty soon. You look quite red and confused, Mr Neville."

"And so would anybody," he retorted, with spirit, "under the circumstances." He threw the notes on the wooden table, and Mrs Hedderwick assumed that he intended her to peruse them.

"However widow women can be so unmaidenly," she declared in shocked tones, "beats me. And knowing these two parties by sight, as I do, I can assure

you, Mr Neville, that you could never be happy with either of 'em."

"There's some one climbing over your fence," he pointed out.

A stout lady, with the aid of a creaking chair supplied by a neighbour, was trying to decide whether to make a sporting effort and jump into Mrs Hedderwick's garden, or whether to trust the fates and tumble into it.

"How dare you!" cried Mrs Hedderwick.

"Lend me a hand," begged the stout lady.

"I'll lend you nothing."

"You're a selfish-minded woman, Mrs Hedderwick."

"Go back to your own home."

The fence gave way, and Mr Neville, watching the scene from the doorway of the summer-house, felt certain he was not seeing either lady at her best. Excuses for them could be imagined. Mrs Hedderwick had to face a damage to property; the other was likely enough suffering from bruises. Mrs Hedderwick, the first to regain composure, turned to him.

"This is no sight for you, sir," she declared. "Come indoors."

"You pretty beauty, you," screamed the corpulent lady. It seemed clear there was no intention of offering a compliment.

In the house, Mrs Hedderwick took the line of frankness. The master printer at the *Dispatch* offices was her brother-in-law, and he had acted in the interests of the family by acquainting her promptly with Mr Neville's intentions; she had thought as, apparently, others had considered, that an improvement could be made in them. "And if you do get any idea of taking a wife back with you," urged Mrs Hedderwick earnestly, "I hope you'll remember that I was the first in the

field." Not without symptoms of alarm, he called her attention to the fact that six ladies were waiting in an orderly *queue* at the front railings. She went out at once, and opened the tradesmen's gate at the side of the house.

"This way," she said amiably, "all who want a talk with Mr Neville." As the last filed through, she signalled to him, and he made his escape.

Young Gainsford, in shirt-sleeves at the *Dispatch* office, put tasks away, and listened to the account given. When Mr Neville spoke with a certain admiration of Mrs Hedderwick the youth shook his head.

"She's the best landlady in the town," he said firmly. "I can't spare her."

"Is there time, then, to make some alteration in the paragraph?"

"It is never too late to amend," said Gainsford, taking up proofs. "And don't you wait about for the last train, my dear sir. I'll borrow a car and drive you to the junction. The fact is, you are not safe here!"

The Education Committee passed a vote of thanks at its next meeting. "Feeling that the great liberality shown by a former townsman will be deeply appreciated by the selected children on reaching the age of fourteen."

From "Leaps and Bounds"

PHILIPPA'S FOX-HUNT

E. C. SOMERVILLE AND MARTIN ROSS

THE dining-room at Aussolas Castle is one of the many rooms in Ireland in which Cromwell is said to have stabled his horse (and probably no one would have objected less than Mrs Knox had she been consulted in the matter). Philippa questions if the room had ever been tidied up since, and she endorses Flurry's observation that "there wasn't a day in the year you wouldn't get feeding for a hen and chickens on the floor." Opposite to Philippa, on a Louis Quinze chair, sat Mrs Knox's woolly dog, its suspicious little eyes peering at her out of their setting of pink lids and dirty white wool. A couple of young horses outside the windows tore at the matted creepers on the walls, or thrust faces that were half shy, half impudent, into the room. Portly pigeons waddled to and fro on the broad window-sill, sometimes flying in to perch on the picture-frames, while they kept up incessantly a hoarse and pompous cooing.

Animals and children are, as a rule, alike destructive to conversation; but Mrs Knox, when she chose, *bien entendu*, could have made herself agreeable in a Noah's ark, and Philippa has a gift of sympathetic attention that personal experience has taught me to regard with distrust as well as respect, while it has often made me realize the worldly wisdom of Kingsley's injunction:

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever.

Family prayers, declaimed by Mrs Knox with alarming austerity, followed close on breakfast, Philippa and

a vinegar-faced henchwoman forming the family. The prayers were long, and through the open window as they progressed came distantly a whoop or two; the declamatory tones staggered a little, and then continued at a distinctly higher rate of speed.

"Ma'am! Ma'am!" whispered a small voice at the window.

Mrs Knox made a repressive gesture and held on her way. A sudden outcry of hounds followed, and the owner of the whisper, a small boy with a face freckled like a turkey's egg, darted from the window and dragged a donkey and bath-chair into view. Philippa admits to having lost the thread of the discourse, but she thinks that the "Amen" that immediately ensued can hardly have come in its usual place. Mrs Knox shut the book abruptly, scrambled up from her knees, and said, "They've found!"

In a surprisingly short space of time she had added to her attire her boots, a fur cape, and a garden hat, and was in the bath-chair, the small boy stimulating the donkey with the success peculiar to his class, while Philippa hung on behind.

The woods of Aussolas are hilly and extensive, and on that particular morning it seemed that they held as many foxes as hounds. In vain was the horn blown and the whips cracked, small rejoicing parties of hounds, each with a fox of its own, scoured to and fro: every labourer in the vicinity had left his work, and was sedulously heading every fox with yells that would have befitted a tiger-hunt, and sticks and stones when occasion served.

"Will I pull out as far as the big rosydandhrum, ma'am?" inquired the small boy; "I seen three of the dogs go in it, and they yowling."

"You will," said Mrs Knox, thumping the donkey

on the back with her umbrella; "here! Jeremiah Regan! Come down out of that with that pitchfork! Do you want to kill the fox, you fool?"

"I do not, your honour, ma'am," responded Jeremiah Regan, a tall young countryman, emerging from a bramble-brake.

"Did you see him?" said Mrs Knox eagerly.

"I seen himself and his ten pups drinking below at the lake 'ere yestherday, your honour, ma'am, and he as big as a chestnut horse!" said Jeremiah.

"Faugh! Yesterday!" snorted Mrs Knox; "go on to the rhododendrons, Johnny!"

The party, reinforced by Jeremiah and the pitchfork, progressed at a high rate of speed along the shrubby path, encountering *en route* Lady Knox, stooping on to her horse's neck under the sweeping branches of the laurels.

"Your horse is too high for my coverts, Lady Knox," said the Lady of the Manor, with a malicious eye at Lady Knox's flushed face and dinged hat; "I'm afraid you will be left behind like Absalom when the hounds go away!"

"As they never do anything here but hunt rabbits," retorted her ladyship, "I don't think that's likely."

Mrs Knox gave her donkey another whack, and passed on.

"Rabbits, my dear!" she said scornfully to Philippa. "That's all she knows about it. I declare it disgusts me to see a woman of that age making such a Judy of herself! Rabbits indeed!"

Down in the thicket of rhododendrons everything was very quiet for a time. Philippa strained her eyes in vain to see any of the riders; the horn-blowing and the whip-cracking passed on almost out of hearing. Once or twice a hound worked through the rhododen-

drons, glanced at the party, and hurried on, immersed in business. All at once Johnny, the donkey-boy, whispered excitedly :

"Look at he! Look at he!" and pointed to a boulder of grey rock that stood out among the dark evergreens. A big yellow cub was crouching on it; he instantly slid into the shelter of the bushes, and the irrepressible Jeremiah, uttering a rending shriek, plunged into the thicket after him. Two or three hounds came rushing at the sound, and after this Philippa says she finds some difficulty in recalling the proper order of events; chiefly, she confesses, because of the wholly ridiculous tears of excitement that blurred her eyes.

"We ran," she said, "we simply tore, and the donkey galloped, and as for that old Mrs Knox, she was giving cracked screams to the hounds all the time, and they were screaming too; and then somehow we were all out on the road!"

What seems to have occurred was that three couple of hounds, Jeremiah Regan, and Mrs Knox's equipage, amongst them somehow hustled the cub out of Aussolas demesne and up on to a hill on the farther side of the road. Jeremiah was sent back by his mistress to fetch Flurry, and the rest of the party pursued a thrilling course along the road, parallel with that of the hounds, who were hunting slowly through the gorse on the hillside.

"Upon my honour and word, Mrs Yeates, my dear, we have the hunt to ourselves!" said Mrs Knox to the panting Philippa, as they pounded along the road. "Johnny, d'ye see the fox?"

"I do, ma'am!" shrieked Johnny, who possessed the usual field-glass vision bestowed upon his kind. "Look at him over-right us on the hill above! Hi! The

spotty dog have him ! No, he's gone from him ! *Gwan out o' that !* " This to the donkey, with blows that sounded like the beating of carpets, and produced rather more dust.

They had left Aussolas some half a mile behind, when, from a strip of wood on their right, the fox suddenly slipped over the bank on to the road just ahead of them, ran up it for a few yards and whisked in at a small entrance gate, with the three couple of hounds yelling on a red-hot scent, not thirty yards behind. The bath-chair party whirled in at their heels, Philippa and the donkey considerably blown, Johnny scarlet through his freckles, but as fresh as paint, the old lady blind and deaf to all things save the chase. The hounds went raging through the shrubs beside the drive, and away down a grassy slope towards a shallow glen, in the bottom of which ran a little stream, and after them over the grass bumped the bath-chair. At the stream they turned sharply and ran up the glen towards the avenue, which crossed it by means of a rough stone viaduct.

" 'Pon me conscience, he's into the old culvert ! " exclaimed Mrs Knox ; " there was one of my hounds choked there once, long ago ! Beat on the donkey, Johnny ! "

At this juncture Philippa's narrative again becomes incoherent, not to say breathless. She is, however, positive that it was somewhere about here that the upset of the bath-chair occurred, but she cannot be clear as to whether she picked up the donkey or Mrs Knox, or whether she herself was picked up by Johnny while Mrs Knox picked up the donkey. From my knowledge of Mrs Knox I should say she picked up herself and no one else. At all events, the next salient point is the palpitating moment when Mrs Knox,

Johnny, and Philippa successively applying an eye to the opening of the culvert by which the stream trickled under the viaduct, while five dripping hounds bayed and leaped around them, discovered by more senses than that of sight that the fox was in it, and furthermore that one of the hounds was in it too.

"There's a sthrong grating before him at the far end," said Johnny, his head in at the mouth of the hole, his voice sounding as if he were talking into a jug; "the two of them's fighting in it; they'll be choked surely!"

"Then don't stand gabbling there, you little fool, but get in and pull the hound out!" exclaimed Mrs Knox, who was balancing herself on a stone in the stream.

"I'd be in dread, ma'am," whined Johnny.

"Balderdash!" said the implacable Mrs Knox. "In with you!"

I understand that Philippa assisted Johnny into the culvert, and presume that it was in so doing that she acquired the two Robinson Crusoe bare footprints which decorated her jacket when I next met her.

"Have you got hold of him yet, Johnny?" cried Mrs Knox up the culvert.

"I have, ma'am, by the tail," responded Johnny's voice, sepulchral in the depths.

"Can you stir him, Johnny?"

"I cannot, ma'am, and the wather is rising in it."

"Well, please God, they'll not open the mill dam!" remarked Mrs Knox philosophically to Philippa, as she caught hold of Johnny's dirty ankles. "Hold on to the tail, Johnny!"

She hauled, with, as might be expected, no appreciable result. "Run, my dear, and look for somebody, and we'll have that fox yet!"

Philippa ran, whither she knew not, pursued by fearful visions of bursting mill dams, and maddened foxes at bay. As she sped up the avenue she heard voices, robust male voices, in a shrubbery, and made for them. Advancing along an embowered walk towards her was what she took for one wild instant to be a funeral; a second glance showed her that it was a party of clergymen of all ages, walking by twos and threes in the dappled shade of the overarching trees. Obviously she had intruded her sacrilegious presence into a Clerical Meeting. She acknowledges that at this awe-inspiring spectacle she faltered, but the thought of Johnny, the hound, and the fox, suffocating, possibly drowning together in the culvert, nerved her. She does not remember what she said or how she said it, but I fancy she must have conveyed to them the impression that old Mrs Knox was being drowned, as she immediately found herself heading a charge of the Irish Church towards the scene of disaster.

Fate has not always used me well, but on this occasion it was mercifully decreed that I and the other members of the hunt should be privileged to arrive in time to see my wife and her rescue party precipitating themselves down the glen.

“Holy Biddy!” ejaculated Flurry, “is she running a paper-chase with all the parsons? But look! For pity’s sake will you look at my grandmother and my Uncle Eustace?”

Mrs Knox and her sworn enemy the old clergyman, whom I had met at dinner the night before, were standing, apparently in the stream, tugging at two bare legs that projected from a hole in the viaduct, and arguing at the top of their voices. The bath-chair lay on its side with the donkey grazing beside it, on the bank a stout archdeacon was tendering advice,

and the hounds danced and howled round the entire group.

"I tell you, Eliza, you had better let the archdeacon try," thundered Mr Hamilton.

"Then I tell you I will not!" vociferated Mrs Knox, with a tug at the end of the sentence that elicited a subterranean lament from Johnny. "Now who was right about the second grating? I told you so twenty years ago!"

Exactly as Philippa and her rescue party arrived, the efforts of Mrs Knox and her brother-in-law triumphed. The struggling, sopping form of Johnny was slowly drawn from the hole, drenched, speechless, but clinging to the stern of a hound, who, in its turn, had its jaws fast in the hind-quarters of a limp, yellow cub.

"Oh, it's dead!" wailed Philippa, "I *did* think I should have been in time to save it!"

"Well, if that doesn't beat all!" said Dr Hickey.

From "Some Experiences of an Irish R.M."

SONGS OF THE SUBURBS

F. W. THOMAS

AS an adopted son of the suburbs, with a stake in the country, and a few spring onions and cabbages in the stake, I have often mourned the strange lack of local patriotism displayed by my neighbours.

They take no pride in the parish pump, show no enthusiasm for our nice new lamp-post; while the average attendance in the public gallery when the Guardians meet is three, two of whom are usually asleep.

Now this is all wrong. Your good citizen should show a lively interest in his suburb. He should be proud of it, extol it, stick up for it. He should brag about its lack of rainfall, its beautiful prospects, its delightful walks, and the excellence of its roads.

But he doesn't. All he brags about is the rates, which, he will tell you, are the highest in the Home Counties; or the fogs, which are thicker than anywhere else; or the train service, which is the same as it was in George Stephenson's day.

What London needs is a few patriotic poets, suburban songsters to hymn the praises of their parish, to sing the joys of Tooting and Stamford Hill, as Wordsworth chanted those of the Braes of Yarrow.

There are scores of places in England which have gained notoriety through the efforts of their native rhymesters. The programme at almost any concert will prove that.

Not long ago I was present at a select little affair in

Gunnersbury, and during the evening I heard songs and recitations, ballads and roundelays, about Bonnie Doon, Afton Water, Killarney, Loch Lomond, Aberfeldy, Devon, and Texas.

But why, I ask you, should a young man in a bent shirt-front sing to me about "ger-lorious Devon," especially when I happen to know that he was born in Upper Holloway? Why, in fact, should there be a song about Devon at all? Because, my friends, because it rhymes with heaven.

There are no songs about Cornwall or Kirkcudbright, because there are no rhymes to them. Or hardly any. For the same reason you will search in vain for lyrics about Tottenham, Willesden Green, Homerton, and the Isle of Dogs.

Of course, there are few, if any, banks and braes about Homerton and Hackney Wick, and the lakes and fells in the Isle of Dogs are few and far between; but these places must have their points, and I want to hear you people singing about them.

I want to go to a concert and hear the parson announce that Mr Frooty will now give us that delightful ballad entitled *Gertrude of Gunnersbury*, or *Beautiful Molly of Chiswick Mall*.

I want to hear songs about the Leafy Lanes of Lewisham, Tooting in the Twilight, and *My Little Cosy Corner down in Cam-ber-well*.

Does not the sun set in these places? Do not the birds sing as blithely in Battersea as they do on the Banks of Allan Water? Very well, then!

There must be in our suburbs some mute inglorious Miltons who can twang the lyre in praise of their native shores. At least, so think the education authorities of West Ham, whose patriotic lead in this matter should be a shining example to other municipal bodies.

By means of a public competition they are seeking to find a poet who can sing the joys of their delectable borough; and the rhyming dictionary in the town library is shedding its leaves like an elm-tree in autumn.

Every night the bards are hard at it, turning out stanzas and strophes, trying their best to work in the glories of the moonlight on the gasworks and the valour of their football team. And out of these agonies there will come at last an Epic of the East which shall make its writer famous.

Although I cannot boast any West Ham blood, yet I have tuned up my scrannel pipe to see what I could do about it; and I must admit that it is a bigger job than I thought.

There are only about five rhymes to Ham, and one of those is not used by the best people. However:

Of all the Hams that are so smart
 There's none I love like West Ham.
 It is the darling of my heart,
 And easily the best ham!
 Of all the suburbs that I know
 There's none that's worth the marking,
 Except the one that lies between
 Bromley-by-Bow and Barking.

Or perhaps it would be better if we struck a more yearning note, like to a weary exile sighing for the dear homeland. Thus:

Off have I wandered down the Romford Road,
 And watched the sunset by the Spotted Dog,
 Gilding the Outfall Sewer with his beams,
 Lighting the gasworks looming through the fog.
 West Ham, West Ham, thy beauty is to me
 A shining star that glimmers through the dark,
 O, Stratford Broadway, and O, Abbey Creek!
 O, Plaistow, and O, Upton, Upton Park!

Doesn't that make a lump come in your throat?
Doesn't it? I'm sorry! I thought it would.

But you are quite right. There's something wrong
with it. I think perhaps the sentimental touch is
somewhat out of place. Let us try a more rollicking
stanza with mouth-organ accompaniment.

West Ham! West Ham! West Ham!

You can get there on the tram.

Talk about your Streatham Hill,

Hackney Downs or Pentonville.

West Ham. West Ham.

All other shows are sham.

We-don't-care-a-dump-for-them.

W-E-S-T-H-A-M!

That is London's brightest gem.

West Ham! West Ham! West Ham!

I must confess that it is not so simple as it looks. Had
it been some other suburb, I might have won. Chis-
wick, for instance:

Way down in sleepy Chiswick,

Where the people need no physic—

and so on. Easy!

Or Peckham! There certainly ought to be a song
about Peckham. Of course, there's *Comin' through the*
Rye, but that doesn't count. Let us try a new line
after Kipling's *Mandalay*.

From the Old Kent Road in Walworth down to Surrey's
Grand Canal

I often walks at even-time a-looking for my gal.

For the wind is in the plane-trees, and the bus conductors
cry

"Outside only. 'Urry up, there! All the way to Peckham
Rye!"

On the road to Peckham Rye,

Where the Nineteen buses ply;

Can't you 'ear the wheels a-churnin' up the mud as they
go by?

Come you back to Peckham Rye,
Where the rag-and-bone men cry,
And the dawn comes up each mornin', which nobody can
deny.

That, I think, has the correct verve and abandon, and ought to go well at the next bun-struggle. I am not quite certain about the number of the buses, but that can easily be altered. And what a great and solemn truth is embodied in that thunderous last line!

Talking of suburban poets, I have often wondered why Swinburne never gave us anything about Putney. He was rather fond of the place, I believe, but so far as I can remember, he wrote not a line about it. I expect it was the rhyme shortage again. There's only 'chutney,' you know. . . . Life can be very hard.

But let us suppose he had lived elsewhere, in the North-west District, where rhymes are easier. Then, I doubt not, we should have had something like this, more or less:

CAMDEN TOWN

An Ode

Far and near from the Nag's Head here, wandering under
the drab skies frown,
Age on age in resurgent rage, tears that blister and tears
that drown,
Shiver the soul of me! Ah, but the whole of me's pining
and whining for Camden Town!
Buses and trams, and mothers and prams, and electric
light outshining the sun,
Ancient fallacies, picture palaces, rest for our souls when
the day is done,
Soft as a sea-mew, seen in a dream (you've no need to
worry, it's only my fun).

After all, perhaps it was just as well he stayed at Putney.

From "Merry-go-Round"

THE WAR AT THE POTWELL INN —FIRST CAMPAIGN

H. G. WELLS

THE private war between Mr Polly and Uncle Jim for the possession of the Potwell Inn fell naturally into three chief campaigns. There was, first of all, the great campaign which ended in the triumphant eviction of Uncle Jim from the inn premises; there came next, after a brief interval, the futile invasions of the premises by Uncle Jim that culminated in the Battle of the Dead Eel; and, after some months of involuntary truce, there was the last supreme conflict of the Night Surprise. Each of these campaigns merits a section to itself.

Mr Polly re-entered the inn discreetly.

He found the plump woman seated in her bar, her eyes astare, her face white and wet with tears. "O God!" she was saying over and over again—"O God!" The air was full of a spirituous reek, and on the sanded boards in front of the bar were the fragments of a broken bottle, and an overturned glass.

She turned her despair at the sound of his entry, and despair gave place to astonishment.

"You come back!" she said.

"Ra-ther," said Mr Polly.

"He's—he's mad drunk and looking for her."

"Where is she?"

"Locked upstairs."

"Haven't you sent to the police?"

"No one to send."

" I'll see to it," said Mr Polly. " Out this way ? "

She nodded.

He went to the crinkly paned window and peered out. Uncle Jim was coming down the garden path towards the house, his hands in his pockets, and singing hoarsely. Mr Polly remembered afterwards, with pride and amazement, that he felt neither faint nor rigid. He glanced round him, seized a bottle of beer by the neck as an improvised club, and went out by the garden door. Uncle Jim stopped, amazed. His brain did not instantly rise to the new posture of things. " You ! " he cried, and stopped for a moment. " You—*scoot* ! "

" *Your* job," said Mr Polly, and advanced some paces.

Uncle Jim stood swaying with wrathful astonishment, and then darted forward with clutching hands. Mr Polly felt that if his antagonist closed he was lost, and smote with all his force at the ugly head before him. Smash went the bottle, and Uncle Jim staggered, half stunned by the blow, and blinded with beer.

The lapses and leaps of the human mind are for ever mysterious. Mr Polly had never expected that bottle to break. In an instant he felt disarmed and helpless. Before him was Uncle Jim, infuriated and evidently still coming on, and for defence was nothing but the neck of a bottle.

For a time our Mr Polly has figured heroic. Now comes the fall again ; he sounded abject terror ; he dropped that ineffectual scrap of glass and turned and fled round the corner of the house.

" Bolls ! " came the thick voice of the enemy behind him, as one who accepts a challenge, and bleeding but indomitable, Uncle Jim entered the house.

" Bolls ! " he said, surveying the bar. " Fightin' with bolls ! I'll showim fightin' with bolls ! "

Uncle Jim had learnt all about fighting with bottles in the Reformatory Home. Regardless of his terror-stricken aunt, he ranged among the bottled beer and succeeded, after one or two failures, in preparing two bottles to his satisfaction by knocking off the bottoms, and gripping them dagger-wise by the necks. So prepared, he went forth again to destroy Mr Polly.

Mr Polly, freed from the sense of urgent pursuit, had halted beyond the raspberry-canecan, and rallied his courage. The sense of Uncle Jim victorious in the house restored his manhood. He went round by the outhouses to the riverside, seeking a weapon, and found an old paddle boathook. With this he smote Uncle Jim as he emerged by the door of the tap. Uncle Jim, blaspheming dreadfully, and with dire stabbing intimations in either hand, came through the splintering paddle like a circus rider through a paper hoop, and once more Mr Polly dropped his weapon and fled.

A careless observer, watching him sprint round and round the inn in front of the lumbering and reproachful pursuit of Uncle Jim, might have formed an altogether erroneous estimate of the issue of the campaign. Certain compensating qualities of the very greatest military value were appearing in Mr Polly, even as he ran; if Uncle Jim had strength and brute courage, and the rich toughening experience a Reformatory Home affords, Mr Polly was nevertheless sober, more mobile, and with a mind now stimulated to an almost incredible nimbleness. So that he not only gained on Uncle Jim, but thought what use he might make of this advantage. The word 'strategious' flamed red across the tumult of his mind. As he came round the house for the third time, he darted suddenly into the yard, swung the door to behind himself, and bolted it, seized the zinc pig's pail that stood by the entrance to the kitchen, and had

it neatly and resonantly over Uncle Jim's head, as he came belatedly in round the outhouses on the other side. One of the splintered bottles jabbed Mr Polly's ear—at the time it seemed of no importance—and then Uncle Jim was down and writhing dangerously and noisily upon the yard tiles, with his head still in the pig pail, and his bottle gone to splinters, and Mr Polly was fastening the kitchen door against him.

"Can't go on like this for ever," said Mr Polly, whooping for breath, and selecting a weapon from among the brooms that stood behind the kitchen door.

Uncle Jim was losing his head. He was up and kicking the door, and bellowing unamiably proposals and invitations, so that a strategist emerging silently by the tap door could locate him without difficulty, steal upon him unawares, and——!

But before that felling blow could be delivered, Uncle Jim's ear had caught a footfall, and he turned. Mr Polly quailed, and lowered his broom—a fatal hesitation.

"Now I got you!" cried Uncle Jim, dancing forward in a disconcerting zigzag.

He rushed to close, and Mr Polly stopped him fealty, as it were a miracle, with the head of the broom across his chest. Uncle Jim seized the broom with both hands. "Lea go," he said, and tugged. Mr Polly shook his head, tugged, and showed pale, compressed lips. Both tugged. Then Uncle Jim tried to get round the end of the broom; Mr Polly circled away. They began to circle about one another, both lugging hard, both intensely watchful of the slightest initiative on the part of the other. Mr Polly wished brooms were longer—twelve or thirteen feet, for example; Uncle Jim was clearly for shortness in brooms. He wasted breath in saying what was to happen shortly—san-

guinary, Oriental, soul-blanching things—when the broom no longer separated them. Mr Polly thought he had never seen an uglier person. Suddenly Uncle Jim flashed into violent activity, but alcohol slows movement, and Mr Polly was equal to him. Then Uncle Jim tried jerks, and, for a terrible instant, seemed to have the broom out of Mr Polly's hands. But Mr Polly recovered it with the clutch of a drowning man. Then Uncle Jim drove suddenly at Mr Polly's midriff; but again Mr Polly was ready, and swept him round in a circle. Then suddenly a wild hope filled Mr Polly. He saw the river was very near, the post to which the punt was tied not three yards away. With a wild yell he sent the broom home under his antagonist's ribs. "Woosh!" he cried, as the resistance gave.

"Oh! Gaw!" said Uncle Jim, going backward helplessly, and Mr Polly thrust hard, and abandoned the broom to the enemy's despairing clutch.

Splash! Uncle Jim was in the water, and Mr Polly had leapt like a cat aboard the ferry punt, and grasped the pole.

Up came Uncle Jim spluttering and dripping. "You (unprofitable matter, and printing it might lead to a Censorship of Novels)—You know I got a weak chess!"

The pole took him in the throat and drove him backward and downwards.

"Lea go!" cried Uncle Jim, staggering, and with real terror in his once-awful eyes.

Splash! Down he fell backward into a frothing mass of water, with Mr Polly jabbing at him. Under water he turned round, and came up again, as if in flight towards the middle of the river. Directly his head reappeared, Mr Polly had him between his shoulders and under again, bubbling thickly. A hand clutched and disappeared.

It was stupendous! Mr Polly had discovered the heel of Achilles. Uncle Jim had no stomach for cold water. The broom floated away, pitching gently on the swell. Mr Polly, infuriated by victory, thrust Uncle Jim under again, and drove the punt round on its chain in such a manner that when Uncle Jim came up for the fourth time—and now he was nearly out of his depth, too buoyed up to walk, and apparently nearly helpless—Mr Polly, fortunately for them both, could not reach him.

Uncle Jim made the clumsy gestures of those who struggle insecurely in the water. "Keep out," said Mr Polly. Uncle Jim, with a great effort, got a footing, emerged until his arm-pits were out of water, until his waistcoat buttons showed, one by one, till scarcely two remained, and made for the camp-sheeting.

"Keep out!" cried Mr Polly, and leapt off the punt and followed the movements of his victim along the shore.

"I tell you I got a weak chess," said Uncle Jim moistly. "I 'ate worter. This ain't fair fightin'."

"Keep out!" said Mr Polly.

"This ain't fair fightin'," said Uncle Jim, almost weeping, and all his terrors had gone.

"Keep out!" said Mr Polly, with an accurately poised pole.

"I tell you I got to land, you Fool," said Uncle Jim, with a sort of despairing wrathfulness, and began moving downstream.

"You keep out," said Mr Polly in parallel movement. "Don't you ever land on this place again! . . ."

Slowly, argumentatively, and reluctantly, Uncle Jim waded downstream. He tried threats, he tried persuasion, he even tried a belated note of pathos; Mr Polly remained inexorable, if in secret a little perplexed

as to the outcome of the situation. "This cold's getting to my marrer!" said Uncle Jim.

"You want cooling. You keep out in it," said Mr Polly.

They came round the bend into sight of Nicholson's ait, where the backwater runs down to the Potwell Mill. And there, after much parley and several feints, Uncle Jim made a desperate effort, and struggled into clutch of the overhanging osiers on the island, and so got out of the water, with the millstream between them. He emerged dripping and muddy and vindictive. "By Gaw!" he said. "I'll skin you for this!"

"You keep off, or I'll do worse to you," said Mr Polly.

The spirit was out of Uncle Jim for the time, and he turned away to struggle through the osiers towards the mill, leaving a shining trail of water among the green-gray stems.

Mr Polly returned slowly and thoughtfully to the inn, and suddenly his mind began to bubble with phrases. The plump woman stood at the top of the steps that led up to the inn door, to greet him.

"Law!" she cried, as he drew near, "'asn't 'e killed you?"

"Do I look it?" said Mr Polly.

"But where's Jim?"

"Gone off."

"'E was mad drunk and dangerous!"

"I put him in the river," said Mr Polly. "That toned down his alcolaceous frenzy! I gave him a bit of a doing altogether."

"Hain't he 'urt you?"

"Not a bit of it!"

"Then what's all that blood beside your ear?"

Mr Polly felt. "Quite a cut! Funny how one

overlooks things! Heated moments! He must have done that when he jabbed about with those bottles. Hallo, Kiddy! You venturing downstairs again? "

" Ain't he killed you? " asked the little girl.

" Well! "

" I wish I'd seen more of the fighting."

" Didn't you? "

" All I saw was you running round the house, and Uncle Jim after you."

There was a little pause. " I was leading him on," said Mr Polly.

" Some one's shouting at the ferry," she said.

" Right-o. But you won't see any more of Uncle Jim for a bit. We've been having a *conversazione* about that."

" I believe it *is* Uncle Jim," said the little girl.

" Then he can wait," said Mr Polly shortly.

He turned round and listened for the words that drifted across from the little figure on the opposite bank. So far as he could judge, Uncle Jim was making an appointment for the morrow. Mr Polly replied with a defiant movement of the punt pole. The little figure was convulsed for a moment, and then went on its way upstream—fiercely.

So it was the first campaign ended in an insecure victory.

From " The History of Mr Polly "

MAINLY ABOUT BOOTS

P. G. WODEHOUSE

BE quick, Smith," he said, as the latter stood looking at him without making any movement in the direction of the door.

"*Quick*, sir?" said Psmith meditatively, as if he had been asked a conundrum.

"Go and find Mr Outwood at once."

Psmith still made no move.

"Do you intend to disobey me, Smith?" Mr Downing's voice was steely.

"Yes, sir."

"What!"

"Yes, sir."

There was one of those you-could-have-heard-a-pin-drop silences. Psmith was staring reflectively at the ceiling. Mr Downing was looking as if at any moment he might say, "Thwarted to me face, ha, ha! And by a very stripling!"

It was Psmith, however, who resumed the conversation. His manner was almost too respectful; which made it all the more a pity that what he said did not keep up the standard of docility.

"I take my stand," he said, "on a technical point. I say to myself, 'Mr Downing is a man I admire as a human being and respect as a master. In——'"

"This impertinence is doing you no good, Smith."

Psmith waved a hand deprecatingly.

"If you will let me explain, sir. I was about to say that in any other place but Mr Outwood's house, your word would be law. I would fly to do your bidding.

If you pressed a button I would do the rest. But in Mr Outwood's house I cannot do anything except what pleases me or what is ordered by Mr Outwood. I ought to have remembered that before. One cannot," he continued, as who should say, "Let us be reasonable," "one cannot, to take a parallel case, imagine the colonel commanding the garrison at a naval station going on board a battleship and ordering the crew to splice the jibboom spanker. It might be an admirable thing for the Empire that the jibboom spanker *should* be spliced at that particular juncture, but the crew would naturally decline to move in the matter until the order came from the commander of the ship. So in my case. If you will go to Mr Outwood, and explain to him how matters stand, and come back and say to me, 'Psmith, Mr Outwood wishes you to ask him to be good enough to come to this study,' then I shall be only too glad to go and find him. You see my difficulty, sir?"

"Go and fetch Mr Outwood, Smith. I shall not tell you again."

Psmith flicked a speck of dust from his coat-sleeve.

"Very well, Smith."

"I can assure you, sir, at any rate, that if there is a boot in that cupboard now, there will be a boot there when you return."

Mr Downing stalked out of the room.

"But," added Psmith pensively to himself, as the footsteps died away, "I did not promise that it would be the same boot."

He took the key from his pocket, unlocked the cupboard, and took out the boot. Then he selected from the basket a particularly battered specimen. Placing this in the cupboard, he relocked the door.

His next act was to take from the shelf a piece of

string. Attaching one end of this to the boot that he had taken from the cupboard, he went to the window. His first act was to fling the cupboard-key out into the bushes. Then he turned to the boot. On a level with the sill the water-pipe, up which Mike had started to climb the night before, was fastened to the wall by an iron band. He tied the other end of the string to this, and let the boot swing free. He noticed with approval, when it had stopped swinging, that it was hidden from above by the window-sill.

He returned to his place at the mantelpiece.

As an afterthought he took another boot from the basket and thrust it up the chimney. A shower of soot fell into the grate blackening his hand.

The bathroom was a few yards down the corridor. He went there, and washed off the soot.

When he returned, Mr Downing was in the study, and with him Mr Outwood, the latter looking dazed, as if he were not quite equal to the intellectual pressure of the situation.

"Where have you been, Smith?" asked Mr Downing sharply.

"I have been washing my hands, sir."

"H'm!" said Mr Downing suspiciously.

"Yes, I saw Smith go into the bathroom," said Mr Outwood. "Smith, I cannot quite understand what it is Mr Downing wishes me to do."

"My dear Outwood," snapped the sleuth, "I thought I had made it perfectly clear. Where is the difficulty?"

"I cannot understand why you should suspect Smith of keeping his boots in a cupboard, and," added Mr Outwood with spirit, catching sight of a Good-Gracious-has-the-man-no-sense look on the other's face, "why he should not do so if he wishes it."

"Exactly, sir," said Psmith approvingly. "You have touched the spot."

"If I must explain again, my dear Outwood, will you kindly give me your attention for a moment? Last night a boy broke out of your house, and painted my dog Sampson red."

"He painted——!" said Mr Outwood, round-eyed. "Why?"

"I don't know why. At any rate, he did. During the escapade one of his boots was splashed with the paint. It is that boot which I believe Smith to be concealing in this cupboard. Now, do you understand?"

Mr Outwood looked amazedly at Smith, and Psmith shook his head sorrowfully at Mr Outwood. Psmith's expression said, as plainly as if he had spoken the words, "We must humour him."

"So with your permission, as Smith declares that he has lost the key, I propose to break open the door of this cupboard. Have you any objection?"

Mr Outwood started.

"Objection? None at all, my dear fellow, none at all. Let me see, what is it you wish to do?"

"This," said Mr Downing shortly.

There was a pair of dumb-bells on the floor, belonging to Mike. He never used them, but they always managed to get themselves packed with the rest of his belongings on the last day of the holidays. Mr Downing seized one of these, and delivered two rapid blows at the cupboard-door. The wood splintered. A third blow smashed the flimsy lock. The cupboard, with any skeletons it might contain, was open for all to view.

Mr Downing uttered a cry of triumph, and tore the boot from its resting-place.

"I told you," he said. "I told you."

"I wondered where that boot had got to," said Psmith. "I've been looking for it for days."

Mr Downing was examining his find. He looked up with an exclamation of surprise and wrath.

"This boot has no paint on it," he said, glaring at Psmith. "This is not the boot."

"It certainly appears, sir," said Psmith sympathetically, "to be free from paint. There's a sort of reddish glow just there, if you look at it sideways," he added helpfully.

"Did you place that boot there, Smith?"

"I must have done. Then, when I lost the key——"

"Are you satisfied now, Downing?" interrupted Mr Outwood with asperity, "or is there any more furniture you wish to break?"

The excitement of seeing his household goods smashed with a dumb-bell had made the archæological student quite a swashbuckler for the moment. A little more, and one could imagine him giving Mr Downing a good, hard knock.

The sleuth-hound stood still for a moment, baffled. But his brain was working with the rapidity of a buzz-saw. A chance remark of Mr Outwood's set him fizzing off on the trail once more. Mr Outwood had caught sight of the little pile of soot in the grate. He bent down to inspect it.

"Dear me," he said, "I must remember to have the chimneys swept. It should have been done before."

Mr Downing's eye, rolling in a fine frenzy from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, also focused itself on the pile of soot; and a thrill went through him. Soot in the fireplace! Smith washing his hands! ("You know my methods, my dear Watson. Apply them.")

Mr Downing's mind at that moment contained one single thought; and that thought was "What ho for the chimney!"

He dived forward with a rush, nearly knocking Mr Outwood off his feet, and thrust an arm up into the unknown. An avalanche of soot fell upon his hand and wrist, but he ignored it, for at the same instant his fingers had closed upon what he was seeking.

"Ah," he said. "I thought as much. You were not quite clever enough, after all, Smith."

"No, sir," said Psmith patiently. "We all make mistakes."

"You would have done better, Smith, not to have given me all this trouble. You have done yourself no good by it."

"It's been great fun, though, sir," argued Psmith.

"Fun!" Mr Downing laughed grimly. "You may have reason to change your opinion of what constitutes——"

His voice failed as his eye fell on the all-black toe of the boot. He looked up, and caught Psmith's benevolent gaze. He straightened himself and brushed a bead of perspiration from his face with the back of his hand. Unfortunately, he used the sooty hand, and the result was like some gruesome burlesque of a nigger minstrel.

"Did—you—put—that—boot—there, Smith?" he asked slowly.

"Yes, sir."

"Then what did you *mean* by putting it there?" roared Mr Downing.

"Animal spirits, sir," said Psmith.

"What!"

"Animal spirits, sir."

What Mr Downing would have replied to this one cannot tell, though one can guess roughly. For, just

as he was opening his mouth, Mr Outwood, catching sight of his Chirgwin-like countenance, intervened.

"My dear Downing," he said, "your face. It is positively covered with soot, positively. You must come and wash it. You are quite black. Really you present a most curious appearance, most. Let me show you the way to my room."

In all times of storm and tribulation there comes a breaking-point, a point where the spirit definitely refuses to battle any longer against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Mr Downing could not bear up against this crowning blow. He went down beneath it. In the language of the ring, he took the count. It was the knock-out.

"Soot!" he murmured weakly. "Soot!"

"Your face is covered, my dear fellow, quite covered."

"It certainly has a faintly sooty aspect, sir," said Psmith.

His voice roused the sufferer to one last flicker of spirit.

"You will hear more of this, Smith," he said. "I say you will hear more of it."

Then he allowed Mr Outwood to lead him out to a place where there were towels, soap, and sponges.

When they had gone Psmith went to the window, and hauled in the string. He felt the calm after-glow which comes to the general after a successfully conducted battle. It had been trying, of course, for a man of refinement, and it had cut into his afternoon, but on the whole it had been worth it.

The problem now was what to do with the painted boot. It would take a lot of cleaning, he saw, even if he could get hold of the necessary implements for

cleaning it. And he rather doubted if he would be able to do so. Edmund, the boot-boy, worked in some mysterious cell far from the madding crowd, at the back of the house. In the boot-cupboard downstairs there would probably be nothing likely to be of any use.

His fears were realized. The boot-cupboard was empty. It seemed to him that, for the time being, the best thing he could do would be to place the boot in safe hiding, until he should have thought out a scheme.

Having restored the basket to its proper place, accordingly, he went up to the study again, and placed the red-toed boot in the chimney, at about the same height where Mr Downing had found the other. Nobody would think of looking there a second time, and it was improbable that Mr Outwood really would have the chimneys swept, as he had said. The odds were that he had forgotten about it already.

Psmith went to the bathroom to wash his hands again, with the feeling that he had done a good day's work.

From "Mike"

EXERCISES

CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON : ROBERT C. BENCHLEY

1. Explain the various direct and indirect references to Dickens that occur in this sketch.
2. Comment at length upon the state of mind of a man who said he didn't care whether it was Christmas or Easter.
3. Write a sketch similar to the one which you have read, taking the summer holidays as your subject. Entitle it "The Gummidges at the Seaside."
4. Write a letter from Last Christmas to Next Christmas.
5. Reply suitably to a letter from Mr Gummidge inviting you to spend Christmas Day at his house.
6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :
 - (i) Christmas Dinners.
 - (ii) Toys.
 - (iii) The Dickensian Christmas.

HOT POTATOES : ARNOLD BENNETT

1. Write down what you suppose Mrs Clayton Vernon thought of Mrs Swann.
2. "Mrs Clayton Vernon had a *lorgnon* at the end of a shaft of tortoiseshell ; otherwise, a pair of eyeglasses on a stick." Comment on the author's rather brutal realism, and search for one or two other examples.
3. Write a newspaper 'puff' for the *Staffordshire Signal* announcing the Festival, and laying special stress upon the appearance of Mr Gilbert Swann in the orchestra.
4. Give a brief account of the interview between mother and son which followed the departure of Mrs Clayton Vernon.
5. Tell the story of an awkward predicament—real or imaginary.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) On Wearing Evening Dress.
- (ii) Common Sense.
- (iii) Musicians.

DR O'GRADY AND THE COOK : GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

1. Discuss Dr O'Grady's method of dealing with "chronic invalids."

2. Comment on the statement that " it is only doctors nowadays who dare speak to us and give us orders in this absolute way, expecting implicit obedience."

3. Compose a coherent paragraph containing twenty or so of the longest and most imposing words you have at your command.

4. The reason why it was so necessary to get the cook out of the way is not fully explained here. Give what seems to you a reasonable explanation for Dr O'Grady's conduct.

5. Write down a soliloquy supposed to have been muttered by the cook after she had limped upstairs.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) Of Doctors.
- (ii) The Charm of Long Words.
- (iii) Of Cooks and Cooking.

THE STORY OF THE WILLOW PLATE EMBELLISHMENT : ERNEST BRAMAH

1. Discuss the saying, " He who sleeps over his workshop brings four eyes into the business."

2. Under the title of " My Impressions " give an account of the story of the willow plate as it might have been written by Wei Chang.

3. Read Charles Lamb's " Dissertation upon Roast Pig," and compare it with Mr Bramah's story. Give in similar fashion the conjectural account of the discovery of any other common process.

4. You will notice that much of the charming humour of this story depends upon its circumlocutions. Everything is described in the most roundabout manner possible. We feel that we are in a world of infinite leisure. Select half a dozen sentences at random and express the meaning of each in as few words as possible.

5. All the great satirists, like Swift, Rabelais, Samuel Butler, and Anatole France, have written biting comments on their own times under the guise of fiction. Show that you appreciate the references to modern events and practices in this story.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) Progress.
- (ii) Destiny.
- (iii) Fables.

OF MY SO-CALLED PAINTING : WILLIAM CAINE

1. Give an account of some subject of which, like Mr Caine, you are less fond than you used to be, and proceed to explain why your taste has altered.

2. Elucidate the author's remark that " the penalty laid upon the dabbling painter is that he shall advance in knowledge and in power stand still."

3. Write a letter of good-humoured banter to a friend who will insist on showing you his stamp-collection every time you visit him.

4. Note the tragedy underlying the last sentence, and say what you would have done had you been in the place of the unhappy painter.

5. Which do you prefer : a candid friend who tells you exactly what he thinks about you in an unpleasant way, or a too-considerate friend who gushes excessively over all your efforts?

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) On being Taken at your own Valuation.
- (ii) Hobbies.
- (iii) The Advantages of being Grown Up.

'THE ONCE-A-YEAR CRICKETER

BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS

1. Write a brief dissertation upon the difference between a 'has-been' and a 'never-was.'
2. Note the author's trick of using long and uncommon words with comic effect. Make a list of those which are new to you and give explanations.
3. Write a character-sketch of the person whom Mr Macdonald Hastings styles "that marine horror, the life and soul of the ship."
4. Give such comments on this cricket-match as you think might have come from "the captain, a Welsh nobody."
5. State your own opinion on the subject of "the Excruciating Torture of the Group Photograph."
6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:
 - (i) On Feeling Nervous.
 - (ii) Compulsory Games.
 - (iii) "Not out."

OF A PIT THAT WAS DIGGED: IAN HAY

1. Write a letter to your local paper protesting against the frequency with which the roads are 'up' for repairs.
2. Give an illustration of your own of what Ian Hay calls "that one step further, which is so often fatal to great enterprises."
3. Note how cleverly the author uses the device of circumlocution in order to obtain a humorous effect. Cite two or three of the best examples.
4. Show that you understand the full meaning of the statement that "Champion was gone . . . probably to establish an *alibi*."
5. Give what Coaldust termed the "yewmerous dialogue" that took place between Robin and the police inspector.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) Politics as an Indoor Pastime.
- (ii) Notable Impersonations.
- (iii) A Friend in Need.

ABOUT WIRELESS : JOHN HENRY

1. Compile a list of twelve 'don'ts' for a novice who is about to install a wireless set.

2. Give Blossom's account of this episode.

3. Mr Havelock Ellis says that " Progress is the exchange of one nuisance for another nuisance." Discuss this with special reference to wireless.

4. You will observe that John Henry gets many humorous effects by artlessly stringing together a number of disconnected facts. *E.g.*, " I kept hens and a dog and was married, and my hair was getting thin." Cite one or two other examples of the kind.

5. Comment upon the reasonableness of the statement : " Joe's a bit of a musician, so of course he was just the chap to help with wireless."

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) Amateurs.
- (ii) Highbrows.
- (iii) Humorous Misunderstandings.

THE MAKING OF A NEW YORKER : O. HENRY

1. Give pen-pictures of three or four towns that you know after the manner of O. Henry's delineations of American cities.

2. Discuss the following statement : " He was called a tramp ; but that was only an elliptical way of saying that he was a philosopher, an artist, a traveller, a naturalist, and a discoverer."

3. People do not, as a rule, feel merely indifferent to the life of a tramp. It either strongly attracts, or as strongly repels them. State your own feelings in this matter.

4. Expand the statement that Raggles' "Odyssey would have been a Limerick, had it been written."

5. Comment on O. Henry's choice of adjectives, and collect a few of the most effective examples.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:

- (i) Tramps in Literature.
- (ii) London.
- (iii) Imagine that you are setting forth from the place where you are now without a penny in your pockets. Describe your experiences.

ON WITH THE DANCE : A. P. HERBERT

1. Quote from the essay a parallel to the following lines from Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* :

Alas ! regardless of their doom,
The little victims play ;
No sense have they of ills to come,
Nor care beyond to-day.

2. Make one of the following characters give a whimsical account of his experiences at a modern dance : Mr Turveydrop, the night-watchman, Mr Pickwick, Miss Prism, Mr Fezziwig, Wong Ts'in, Uncle Ray, Joe Murgatroyd.

3. Comment on Mr Herbert's use of comparisons, and cite what you think is the most effective example.

4. Compile a list of humorous instructions and warnings to one who is thinking of learning to dance.

5. Give an account of a discussion between devotees of the old and the new dancing. Put yourself in the chair and give a calm and impartial summing-up at the end, or address to the author a suitable letter either of sympathy or remonstrance on the subject of this extract.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) The Vagaries of Fashion.
- (ii) Jazz.
- (iii) On the Right of the Banjo to be Considered a Musical Instrument.

ON HAVING A COLD : R. S. HOOPER

1. Comment on the use of irony in this selection.
2. Note the comic misuse of words in such a phrase as "Amalgamated puncture of quinine." Find another good example from this sketch, and then give one of your own devising.
3. Draw up a humorous advertisement proclaiming the virtues of a new cure for colds.
4. Write a letter of commiseration to a friend who has stated that he does not know what it is to catch a cold.
5. Comment upon the length of Mr Hooper's sentences.
6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :
 - (i) Of Gargling as a Pastime.
 - (ii) Doctors I have Known.
 - (iii) Influenza.

THE UNDERSTUDY : W. W. JACOBS

1. Make your own comments on the story of the man who said " he 'ad been in jail three times because dogs follered him 'ome and wouldn't go away when he told 'em to."
2. Compose pen-portraits of Sam Small, Ginger Dick, and Peter Russet.
3. Comment on the suitability of the title which Mr Jacobs has given this story. Suggest the best alternative that occurs to you.
4. Relate the funniest dog story that you have ever heard, *or* write a short conversation supposed to have taken place between Sam Small and Ginger Dick after the events narrated here.
5. Compose a speech for or against the proposition that there are far too many dogs.
6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :
 - (i) Blarney.
 - (ii) Kindness to Animals.
 - (iii) On Having Words.

HOW HARRIS LOST HIS WIFE : JEROME K. JEROME

1. Give a conjectural description of Mrs Harris that would be sufficiently exact to serve for the purpose of identification.
2. Describe in detail what you suppose took place at the reunion between Mr and Mrs Harris.
3. Tell the story of the most embarrassing experience you have ever had.
4. Indicate the line you would take if you were called upon to act as adjudicator in the controversy between Harris and his wife.
5. Compose a short homily on the evils of 'showing off.'
6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :
 - (i) Misunderstandings.
 - (ii) The Necessity of Cultivating the Powers of Observation.
 - (iii) On Disguising one's Feelings.

THE THIRD BATHE : E. V. KNOX

1. Discuss the proposition that the average seaside resort is greatly overrated.
2. Comment on the use which Mr Knox makes of the devices of simplicity and repetition, and add examples drawn from other sources.
3. Say what you can about the aptness of the following paragraph :

Without professing to be a *gourmet*, I may say that I have rolled round my tongue a fairly considerable number of brands of the British sea. There is the light and heady Atlantic ; the glutinous yet stimulating tippie of Scarborough and Skegness ; but for real body commend me to the little-known chalk vintage of Rottingdean. There is a strong, gritty flavour about the kind here.

Write a paragraph describing qualities of the brand with which you are most familiar.

4. Say what you think the author means by saying that he

prefers to look at the sea as "one of the triumphs of municipal progress, like paving or gas."

5. Compile a list of humorous hints intended for those about to bathe.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:

- (i) Legacies.
- (ii) "The sea is as nonsensical a thing as any going."—
MARK TAPLEY.
- (iii) Of Seaside Pleasures.

MARIA ON POETRY: MRS JOHN LANE

1. Give a character-sketch of Maria based on the information given you in this chapter.

2. Show that you appreciate the humour of Maria's last words.

3. Discuss the statement that "dust and disorder are natural to all young things."

4. Summarize Maria's opinions on the subject of Shakespeare, and say whether you agree.

5. Say what you think of Maria's assertion that "people who write have an easy time."

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:

- (i) On Writing Poetry.
- (ii) Wedding-presents.
- (iii) On the Delight of not having to get up if one does not want to.

OXFORD AS I SEE IT: STEPHEN LEACOCK

1. Make what comments you feel to be necessary upon the following statements:

- (i) My views on Oxford are based upon observations extending over fourteen years.
- (ii) The lack of an adequate building fund compels them to go on working in the same old buildings which they have had for centuries.

- (iii) They have no other place to cook in than this.
- (iv) The result was unsatisfactory and they are putting it back.
- (v) There are men in Oxford who have rested their brains this way for over thirty years.

2. Summarize what you can conclude from this essay to be the main differences between Oxford and the American universities.

3. Discuss as humorously as you can the assertion that the men of England have been terrorized by the women.

4. Mention one or two instances that show Mr Leacock to be an acute observer of British customs.

5. Discuss Mr Leacock's serious proposals for founding and ordering a university.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) Of Marks and Tests.
- (ii) Why I Like (or Dislike) Lectures.
- (iii) Women at Oxford.

THE GREAT WHITE LIGHT: D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS

1. This sketch opens as if it were going to be a serious descriptive piece. What is the first hint which you get of the writer's humorous intent? Try your hand at writing a paragraph that shall be, to all appearances, quite serious, but showing in the last sentence that you are hoaxing the reader.

2. What is in your opinion the funniest sentence in the whole essay? Try to justify your choice.

3. Explain as well as you can the references made in this essay to the Rubicon, Wordsworth, Thoreau, the Quantitative Theory of money, and Georgian poets.

4. Give the letter of protest that a serious Bimetallist is supposed to have written to Mr Wyndham Lewis.

5. Observe particularly Mr Wyndham Lewis's choice of epithets, and comment on those italicized in the following phrases: *bone-headed* rectitude, *exquisite* lyrics, *entrancing* essays, *tremendous* epics, one vast *placid* smile.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:

- (i) Cows.
- (ii) On Making Resolutions.
- (iii) Money.

THE DOUBLE : E. V. LUCAS

1. Discuss the old waiter's assertion that betting is "a mug's game."

2. Make a list of half a dozen ambiguous words like 'tips' and 'doubles,' giving the meanings in each case.

3. Comment on the following terms as they are used in this essay : Fishers, outsider, long odds, a cert, a packet.

4. Give as tersely as you can the moral of this story.

5. Express the feelings of the friend as he handed over the sovereign which he said that he had forgotten to "put on."

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:

- (i) Suspicions.
- (ii) Tips.
- (iii) Of Some Minor Agonies.

A PAIR OF NUTCRACKERS : A. NEIL LYONS

1. Give an alternative title to this story.

2. Relate the funniest experience you have ever had in trying to make a purchase.

3. Draw up an advertisement for Booker's Weed-killer.

4. Imagine yourself trying to explain to the "Grand Old Blinker" the details of an escalator or a lift. Give the conversation.

5. Write a paragraph supposed to have been clipped from a contemporary newspaper, giving an account of the first pair of nutcrackers ever made.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:

- (i) The Good Old Days.
- (ii) Anecdotes.
- (iii) Buying and Selling.

FAIR DIVISION: BARRY PAIN

1. Say what you yourself would have done in the circumstances described in this story.
2. Give a conjectural report of the second conversation which took place between Jane and "Old Whiskers."
3. You will notice that word-economy is one of Mr Barry Pain's outstanding qualities. He never uses a word unnecessarily and he extracts the maximum value from those which he does use. The portrait-group of the children in the second paragraph will give a sufficient example of this. The strokes are but few, and yet the reader's impressions of the five children are perfectly distinct. Compose a similar portrait-group of four or five persons.
4. Suggest a suitable alternative title for this story.
5. Under the title "Twenty Years After" say what you imagine became of each of the five children.
6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:
 - (i) Apples and Oranges.
 - (ii) Dilemmas.
 - (iii) On Having the Last Word.

OF LIMERICKS: EDEN PHILLPOTTS

1. Give the three conditions which Briggs said a good limerick must satisfy, and add your own comments.
2. Write out a limerick, preferably one of your own composing, and consider how far it squares with Briggs' requirements.
3. Discuss the assertion that "very few poets, except the greatest, have any sense of humour at all." Illustrate, as far as you can, by actual examples.
4. Exemplify the author's statement that "it doesn't follow because you have learned how to do a thing that you can do it."
5. Give a fairly detailed examination of the funniest poem (long or short) which you have ever read.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:

- (i) The Disadvantages of a Sense of Humour.
- (ii) Limericks.
- (iii) My Favourite Poet.

THE PHILANTHROPIST : W. PETT RIDGE

1. Make your own suggestions of ways in which Mr Neville might have disposed advantageously of five thousand pounds for the benefit of his native town.

2. Explain, if you can, young Gainsford's apparently inconsequent replies when Mr Neville announced himself.

3. Give, with appropriate headlines, the article announcing Mr Neville's munificence as it appeared in the *Dispatch*.

4. Report the discussion that took place at the meeting of the local Education Committee when the terms of Mr Neville's amended offer were made known.

5. Write down the probable thoughts of Mr Neville as he sat in the train bound for London.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:

- (i) "It is never too late to mend."
- (ii) Philanthropists.
- (iii) Landladies.

PHILIPPA'S FOX-HUNT

E. C. SOMERVILLE AND MARTIN ROSS

1. Discuss the statement that "animals and children are, as a rule, alike destructive to conversation."

2. What internal evidence can you find that this episode took place in Ireland.

3. Write a short character-sketch of Mrs Knox.

4. Say whether you agree with the "worldly wisdom" of Kingsley's injunction:

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever.

5. Mention any other books or poems which you have read dealing with the subject of fox-hunting.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) Irish Humour.
- (ii) Fox-hunting.
- (iii) Tight Corners.

SONGS OF THE SUBURBS : F. W. THOMAS

1. Make a list of all the words for which Mr Thomas says it is difficult or impossible to find rhymes. Accept his challenge and give rhymes (good or bad) for as many of them as you can.

2. Compose a song in praise of your own district, *or* write a letter of warning to a friend who has just announced his intention of taking up his abode there.

3. Say which one of Mr Thomas's verses appeals to you most strongly. Give reasons.

4. Compose a whimsical remonstrance addressed by Dame London to her children the Suburbs.

5. Explain the references to the Home Counties, George Stephenson, the Braes of Yarrow, scrannel pipe, and Bonnie Doon.

6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects :

- (i) Local Patriotism.
- (ii) Where I would Choose to Live.
- (iii) The Parish Pump.

THE WAR AT THE POTWELL INN—FIRST CAMPAIGN : H. G. WELLS

1. Observe the picturesque quality of Mr Wells' descriptions, and judge how far this is due to the exact use of words, as where he speaks of "the lumbering and reproachful pursuit of Uncle Jim." Mention two or three bits of description in this chapter that seem to you to be particularly apt.

2. Write a letter to one who is notorious for his dislike of cold water.

3. Enlarge upon the statement that "the lapses and leaps of the human mind are for ever mysterious."
4. Compose a pen-portrait of Uncle Jim.
5. Write notes on Mr Polly's vocabulary.
6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:
 - (i) Of Heroes and Heroism.
 - (ii) Strength *v.* Skill.
 - (iii) Artfulness.

MAINLY ABOUT BOOTS : P. G. WODEHOUSE

1. Give a summary of the events that you imagine must have led up to the episode dealt with in this extract.
2. Write a sequel to the extract.
3. Construct two or three phrases of your own after the fashion of the following:
 - (i) There was one of those you-could-have-heard-a-pin-drop silences.
 - (ii) A Good-Gracious-has-the-man-*no*-sense look on the other's face.
4. Write an original short story entitled "In a Scrape—and Out Again."
5. Psmith, being an original young man, styled himself thus so that he might be distinguished from the numerous other members of the Smith tribe. Do you find him convincing? That is to say, do you really believe a schoolboy could have acted as he did? Write a description of the most remarkable schoolboy you have ever met.
6. Write an essay on one of the following subjects:
 - (i) Of Quibbling.
 - (ii) Schoolmasters in Fiction and in Fact.
 - (iii) Boots.

